











# COMPOSERS



*Cultural Leaders of India*

# COMPOSERS

Jayadeva • Kshetrajna • Tallapaka Annamacharya  
Tyagaraja • Maharaja Svati Tirunal • Syama Sastri  
Muthuswamy Dikshitar • Amir Khusrau • Tansen  
Gopalakrishna Bharati • Swami Haridas

General Editor : V. Raghavan



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## ABOUT THE SERIES

The object of the series is to offer the general reader, authentic accounts of the life and work of the great personalities who have contributed in large measure to Indian culture and philosophy and influenced the mind and life of its people. The series includes about 125 such names-seers and philosophers, poets and dramatists, mystics and religious leaders, writers on science, aestheticians and composers.

The books are intended for the average reader who is keen to learn more about Indian culture without going into finer academic details.

Dr. V. Raghavan, General Editor of the series and an outstanding Sanskrit scholar and Indologist passed away while this book was still under production.

## PREFACE

Two volumes in this series have been devoted to saints and mystics. The discourses and poetic outpourings of most of them are an integral part of our musical heritage. This volume entitled “Composers” includes only some of these luminaries. Those who figure here are basically composers and their contributions form the high-watermark of classical concert-music.

Jayadeva leads the galaxy of these composers. All music compositions before the *Gita-govinda* can be seen only in music treatises. Jayadeva's work is a masterpiece in Sanskrit poetry, imitated endlessly by later poets and composers. It is also the fountain-head of dance and dance-drama, and of the sampradaya of “madhura-bhakti”. Annamacharya shares the honour of being the “Pitamaha” of Karnataka music along with Purandaradasa. His compositions gave shape to the *Kirtana*, a major song-form of Karnataka music. His creations include the theme of madhura-bhakti but it was Kshetrajna who specialised in it. An equally prolific composer, Kshetrajna was a master of the rhetoric of love. He has composed a *Pada* for every possible hue of nayaka and nayika as developed in the *Alankara* and *Natya Sastras*. His *Padas* are still sung and their *abhinaya* form is popular in dance.

Tyagaraja, Muthuswami Dikshitar and Syama Sastri form the Trinity of Karnataka Music. In their compositions, the *Kirtana* or *Kriti* form attained perfection. The variations in *Raga* and *Tala*, and their amalgamation with *Bhava* go on to make the *Kriti* more than just a recitative devotional composition. The repertoire of South Indian concerts is dominated by their creations.

Although Tanjavur and Trivandrum are far from each other, music and dance brought them close during the time of the Royal Composer and patron Maharaja Svati Tirunal, whose varied compositions include *Kritis*, *Varnas*, *Padas*, pieces for dance, Karnataka and Hindustani modes and long-story compositions for *Harikatha*. Gopalakrishna Bharati represents the Tamil composers of this time. The long-story composition on Nanda, the Pariah—devotee of Lord Nataraja made him immortal. He adopted colloquial Tamil in

his songs. There are very few Bharata Natya recitals without his song on the dance of Nataraja, *Natanam adinar* in *Raga Vasanta* . *Varugalamo*, in which the *Pariah-bhakta* begs audience with the Lord is another moving masterpiece in *Raga Manji*.

Three outstanding names in the history of Hindustani music are Amir Khusrau, Tansen and Swami Haridas. The first is usually considered to be responsible for the Persian influences in North Indian music, *Ragas*, song forms and instruments. The other two were primarily musicians, pioneers of the highest form of North Indian music, the *Dhrupad*. Haridas was a saint-singer who shunned courts and patrons and sang only of God and for God .

The contributors to this series are people who have made special study of the subjects of their article. Regarding the details about the lives of the personalities, biographical evidence is available only in some cases. For the rest there is an indistinguishable blend of legend with history. These, however, are important as they reflect the popular image of these great artists and people's evaluation of their contributions.

V.RAGHAVAN

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## JAYADEVA

*Swami Prajnanananda*

Jayadeva was a great composer, poet and musician. A well-known *sloka*<sup>1</sup> mentions Umapatidhara, Govardhana, Sarana, Dhoyi and Jayadeva as the five gems in the royal court of Maharaja Laksmanasena. In the gloss, *Vaisnavatosini*, on the *Bhagavata* it has been mentioned: "*Sri Jayadeva-sahacharena maharaja Laksmanasenamantrivarena Umapatidharena.*" From this, it is understood that Jayadeva was one of the royal poets (sabha-kavi) of Maharaja Laksmanasena. Scholars accept that Jayadeva was a court-poet of Maharaja Laksmanasena, the last Hindu king of Bengal.

Jayadeva lived in the middle or the end of the twelfth century A.D. His native place was Kendubilva (Kenduli) in the Birbhum (ancient name Kamakoti) district of West Bengal. The present name of Kendubilva is Jayadeva-Kenduli. Jayadeva's father's name was Bhojadeva and mother's name was Vamadevi.<sup>2</sup> The poet married Padmavati. One of the commentators of the *Gita-govinda*, commenting on the words "*padmavati-charana-charana-chakravarti*" in the text, says: "*tatha-namni Jayadeva-patni.*" Some hold that the name of the wife of Jayadeva was Rohini. The followers of the Sahajiya doctrine say that Rohini was a parakiya, and the poet's real wife was Padmavati, who was well versed in the art of dance and music.

<sup>1</sup>Govardhanascha Sarano Jayadeva Umapatih  
Kavirajascha ratnani panchaite Laksmanasya cha.

<sup>2</sup>Some say that Jayadeva's mother's name was Ramadevi or Radhadevi. But these suggestions are not correct, because from many sources it is known that Jayadeva's mother's name was Vamadevi.

There are some controversies as regards the birth-place of Kavi Jayadeva. Some are of opinion that he came from Utkala or Orissa, while others hold that he was born in South India. Nevertheless, the prevailing view is that he was born in Bengal (i.e. in West Bengal, known as the Radhadesa). In Sanskrit literature, there are two other Jayadevas, one of them being the composer of the prosody *Chhandassutra* and the other the composer of the drama, *Prasannaraghava* and the book on rhetoric, *Chhandaloka*.

Jayadeva was greatly influenced by the Vaishnava religion and was devoted to the doctrine of Radha-Krishna (Radha-Krishnatattva). There is a controversy regarding Radha as the divine consort of Sri Krishna, as she is not met with at all in the *Bhagavata*. However, we find the divine love sports of Radha and Krishna in Jayadeva's celebrated songbook, the *Gitagovinda*. Scholars have accepted that Jayadeva's poem *Gitagovinda* exerted a great influence on the development of Vaishnava poetry in Mithila (Bihar) and Bengal.

Jayadeva composed the religio-mystical songs of the *Gita-govinda* in Sanskrit "but their rhythm and rhyme belong to Apabhramsha poetry". Dr. Sukumar Sen says that just before the Turkish impact, during the reign of Maharaja Laksmanasena, the country offered the last and most important contribution to neo-classical literature which is Jayadeva's *Gitagovinda*. "By injecting the tenderness and melliflence of the popular musical lyric into the strong frame of Sanskrit poetry, Jayadeva made the last attempt at its resurrection."

The songs of the *Gitagovinda*, known also as Astapadis, are specimens of the richest and finest sringara-rasa-kavya; they represent the highest aesthetic quality. The general category under which the musico-literary composition of the *Gitagovinda* comes is a prabandha which comprises six limbs (angas). The style of the *Gitagovinda* is marked by soft and fluid syllabic schemes that charm all lovers of poetry and music. As for example,

*lalitalavangalata parisilana komalamalayasamire  
madhukara nikara karamvita kokila kujita kunja kutire*

*viharati haririha sarasavasante  
nrityati yuvatijanena samam sakhi virahijanasya durante.*

We generally find in old Bengali songs the Krishna-Vishnu or Siva-Sakti legends or mystic and ritualistic elements of esoteric cults. In the *Gitagovinda* of Jayadeva, we have the divine sport (lila) of Radha-Krishna as a means of worship and devotion (sadhana or upasana). Known for its aisvarya (richness) and madhurya (beauty), it is depicted in the form of different aesthetic sentiments (rasasvadana). We find here also the scheme of nayaka-nayika-bheda (different forms of hero and heroine in love) and that of upasya-upasaka-bheda (different types of deity and devotee). Chaitanyaite Vaishnavas and other Bhakti schools therefore regard the *Gitagovinda* not only as a poetic composition of great beauty, but also as a religious work and explain it in terms of the bhakti-rasa-sastra.

The *Gitagovinda* of Jayadeva is composed with its supreme Nayaka (hero) as Sri Krishna-Bhagavan and its nayika as the Parama-Prakriti, Sri Radhika. This musical poem is divided into twelve cantos (sargas), having different names like samoda-damodara, aklesa-kesava, mugdha-madhusudana, dhrista-vaikuntha, nagara-narayana, etc. There are twenty-four songs (ganas) set to twelve classical ragas and five talas. The ragas are: malava-gauda, gurjari, vasanta, ramakiri or ramakali, karnata or (kanada), devasakha or desakha, desa-varadi, or varadi, vibhasa, gondakiri, malava, bhairava and bhairavi, and the talas are: yati, ekatali, rupaka, nihsara and astatala.

The raga forms as used in the *Gitagovinda-padagana* are somewhat different from those of the present time.<sup>1</sup> At present, the correct rendering of the raga forms of the *Gitagovinda* is very rare, or rather it differs from one part of the country to the other and one sampradaya to the other. It is sometimes claimed that the correct rendering of the *Gitagovinda-ganas* is found in the temple of Jagannath in Puri in Orissa. But after close examination it is found that that claim is not correct either in Orissa or in Bengal. It has also been found that the musicians of

<sup>1</sup>I have elaborately discussed this in my book, *Historical Development of Indian Music* (1960), in the section on the raga-forms of the *Gitagovinda*.

It has also been found that the musicians of Tanjore<sup>1</sup> show their superiority in the correct rendering of the tunes that are used in the *Gitagovinda*. The Sarasvati Mahal Library of Tanjore has published a book setting forth the abhinayas for rendering in dance each of the songs of the *Gitagovinda*. The talas used in the *Gitagovinda* are mostly those found in the padavali-kirtanas of Bengal.

There are many commentaries on Jayadeva's *Gitagovinda*. In the Aufrecht's *Catalogus Catalogorum*, we find at least forty of them. The *Balabodhini* commentary or gloss of Pujari Goswami is very popular in Bengal. Rana Kumbha (1433-1468 A.D.) of Mewar wrote an elaborate commentary, *Rasikapriya*, on the *Gitagovinda* of Jayadeva, and there he has described the ragas used in the *Gitagovinda*, according to the practice known to him. His monumental work, *Sangitaraja*, records those changed classical forms of the ragas.

Jayadeva's *Gitagovinda* was an inspiration to the composers of the padavali-kirtanas; the *Gitagovinda* forms the background of the evolution of the padavali-kirtana of Bengal. Jayadeva was also the source from which themes of Krishnalila or doctrines of Krishna-bhakti were evolved by later Vaishnava scholars and aesthetes. The *Gitagovinda* inspired the Karnataka composers in as a musician, as a mystic poet and a spiritual Vaishnava South India and also a host of poets all over India who produced numerous imitations of *Gitagovinda*. There can be no doubt that the first and most important literary record of pre-Chaitanya Vaishnavism in Bengal was the lyrical poem of Jayadeva which must have been the living source of inspiration of later Bengali poems of Sri-Krishna-kirtana, such as those of Badu Chandidas (*circa* end of the 14th century). In conclusion, it can be said that Kavi-Jayadeva's name and contribution are still memorable, and sadhaka he continues to be honoured to this day all over the country.

<sup>1</sup>Also known as Tanjavur

# KSHETRAJNA

*P V. Rajamannar*

Kshetrajna is undoubtedly the most outstanding composer of padams in the Telugu language. Though originally padams included musical compositions with religious, devotional or philosophical themes, in later days, by the time of Kshetrajna, sringara became the main, if not the only theme of padams. It is true that the sringara-bhava was often associated with a deity, specially, Krishna but on that account only, they cannot be taken out of the category of padams with sringara as the main theme.

Very little authentic material is available to construct the life of Kshetrajna. All that one can say with an amount of certainty is that he lived in the first half of the 17th century, and the Rajah of Tanjavur, Raghunatha Naik, and his son, Achyutha Vijayaraghava Naik, were his patrons. He appears to have obtained the patronage also of Tirumala Naik of Madura and the Nawab of Golkonda. There is internal evidence in his padams of his visits to several temples and sacred places. There are apocryphal legends relating to Kshetrajna's life which are founded more on imagination than on any reliable fact. Scholars have tried to find autobiographical details in his padams to weave a story of his life. The result is quite attractive but most of their inferences are purely speculative.

Kshetrajna's original name appears to have been Varadayya. One cannot be certain when and why he came to be called Kshetrajna. The term occurs in the 13th chapter of the *Bhagavadgita*; but it is difficult to relate the concept of "Kshetrajna" contained therein to the composer of the padams. It may be that he attained in course of time the spiritual perfection

which justified the title. There is also the other popular version that he got the name because of his visits to several kshetras. There has been considerable controversy as to the place of his birth. Several scholars, after great deal of research, have suggested different villages. One of them gives it as the village of Movva or Muvva in the district of Krishna in Andhra Pradesh. This conclusion is based on most of the padams being dedicated to Muvva Gopala. It is sufficient to mention a few other villages, suggested by other scholars, namely, Movuru in Chingleput district, a village of the same name in South Arcot district, the village of Movaluru in Tanjavur district, all in the present state of Tamil Nadu. Nevertheless, interesting though it may be, the truth remains that a poet's or artist's worth does not depend upon the place where he was born. Wherever his place of birth, one thing is clear that his itinerary was more in the Tamil districts. The places and deities mentioned in the padams range from Chingleput (which is near Madras) to Madura in the south; Trivellore, Chidambaram, Kanchipuram, Madurai, Srirangam, Tanjavur, are all included in the list of places which Kshetrajna visited. He also appears to have gone to Srisailam, Cuddappah and Hampi.

Kshetrajna was a prolific composer. In one of his padams, he himself mentions the number as 4500. However, today, in spite of arduous effort on the part of music-lovers and scholars, about 350 only are available to us. Even these suffice to make us realise his genius and versatility.

In some of the padams, there is mention of the name of one or the other of his patrons, namely, Krishnappa Naik, who ruled at Ginjee, during the end of the 16th century, Raghunatha Naik of Tanjavur and his son Vijayaraghava Naik. In the majority, however, there is a dedication only to Muvva Gopala. Unlike other composers, Kshetrajna does not mention his own name. The name 'Varada' occurs in some of the padams but clearly this is a reference to the deity Varadarajaswami of Kanchipuram.

Nearly a century before Kshetrajna, Annamacharya, a great devotee of Sri Venkateswara of Tirumala-Tirupati, had written hundreds of padams. Indeed, he can be rightly called the father of pada-kavītvam. Annamacharya's padams fall into two broad

categories, sringara padams and vairagya padams, according to their themes. Kshetrajna was evidently influenced by Annamacharya's sringara padams. There is one difference between these two great composers. Annamacharya's padams, whether erotic or devotional, were all devoted to Sri Venkateswara, whereas among the padams of Kshetrajna, there are some which relate to living persons. It is also quite likely that Kshetrajna was familiar with the compositions of the famous Kannada musician-saint, Purandaradasa.

Kshetrajna's padams reveal a deep and extensive knowledge of music. He has composed padams in over forty ragas. These include ragas well known at the present day like Bhairavi, Kalyani, Todi, Saveri, Bilahari and Sankarabharanam. Some of the padams are in rare ragas, like Ghantarava, Saindhavi, Khande. His favourite raga appears to be Kambhoji. In his padams we can find a complete development of raga-bhava, in an elaborate pattern of Pallavi, Anupallavi and Charanas. The padams should generally be sung in the Vilamba-kala, slow tempo. The talas which occur frequently are Triputa, Chapu and Jhampa.

One important feature of Kshetrajna's padams is that they are specially suited for abhinaya and natya. Kshetrajna had first-hand knowledge of the Natyasastra. Even to this day, his padams always find a place in the repertoire of musicians who accompany the dancers. Jayadeva had the good fortune of having as his wife a talented dancer, Padmavati. Kshetrajna had a reputation for amorous adventures with devadasis who were primarily responsible for the preservation and continuity of the dance traditions in this country and was apparently well acquainted with the principles and practice of abhinaya. One scholar is of the view that Kshetrajna lived near Koochipudi, the seat of the well-known traditional school of dance, continued from generation to generation by certain Brahmin families, who devoted themselves entirely to this art and must have acquired a thorough knowledge of Natyasastra from the masters in Koochipudi. It is probable that he was a pupil in Koochipudi, that he became friendly with and loved a fellow pupil, a devadasi, to which fact there is an allusion in some of his



padams. All this is a conjecture. However, two facts remain which are not controvertible. One is Kshetrajna's intimate knowledge of Natyasastra and the other is the adoption of a large number of Kshetrajna's padams to serve as a musical background for generations of Koochipudi teachers and artists, I have seen in manuscript detailed analysis of some of the padams of Kshetrajna for purposes of abhinaya in the hands of the greatest exponent of the Koochipudi style of dance, Shri Vedantam Lakshminarayana Sastri. Inextricably, if not integrally, Natyasastra is associated with Alankarasastra. It is not therefore surprising to find evidence of Kshetrajna's thorough knowledge of Alankarasastra in his padams. In the middle of the 16th century, Bhanu Datta Misra wrote a treatise named *Rasamanjari*. Recently, a Telugu commentary on this work called *Sringara Rasamanjari* has come to light. It is of special interest for the reason that illustrations in this commentary are furnished by Kshetrajna's padams. But it does not follow that Kshetrajna deliberately composed his padams for this purpose, namely, to give lakshyas for lakshanas in the original. Apart from the *Rasamanjari*, there are a number of well-known treatises, which deal with different types of nayika and nayaka and which describe different vibhavas, anubhavas and sancharibhavas depicting physical and psychological states, with reference to the different *rasas* and it is not unlikely that Kshetrajna studied several of them.

Treatises on poetics and Natyasastra mention several types of nayikas. The enumeration is from different standpoints. There are the three categories of sviya, the lawfully married wife; parakiya, which term comprised both an unmarried girl and a married woman, and samanya, one who is not bound by any tie to any one, generally vesya (courtesan). There is another classification based on sexual experience, mugdha, one who is new to such experience, one of whose primary qualities is shyness; madhya, one who is not new to such experience, but who is still not forward enough and praudha, one who is well versed in love-making. Each one of these types again falls into different classes. There are then the well-known eight-fold types, namely, svadhinapatika, one to whom the husband is entirely devoted; Vasakasajjika, a woman waiting dressed and

adorned to receive her husband or lover; Virahotkanthita, one who is eagerly and nervously anxious on account of her husband or lover not turning up at the expected time; Vipralabdha, one who is disappointed in not finding her lover at the appointed place; Khandita, one whose lover has spent the night with another woman, and who scolds him; Kalahantarita, one who has quarrelled with her lover and sends him away and then repents; Prositabhartrika, one who is pining for her lover, who has gone abroad and Abhisarika, one who herself goes to meet her lover. Among the padams of Kshetrajna, we can find depictions of each one of these and other types of nayikas.

Kshetrajna's padams portray sringara rasa in all its infinite variety. There are excellent examples both of samyoga sringara and viyoga sringara, depicting the state of a nayika, when she is with her lover and when she is alone, suffering the pangs of separation, respectively. The different states, physical and mental, of the nayika are elaborately described in the works dealing with poetics. Each one of these states is described in the padams of Kshetrajna.

In this context, it is apposite to refer to an aesthetic doctrine that there is a special type of sringara rasa, which is an aspect of Bhakti. The classic instance is of course the love of the Gopis for Krishna. Roopa Goswami developed this theory in his work *Ujjvala Nilamani*. This theory may sublimate the patently erotic nature of the padams of Kshetrajna into expressions of spiritual experience. I am, however, unable to find any trace of a metaphysical exposition, directly or indirectly, in the padams of Kshetrajna.

An important feature of Kshetrajna's padams is the language. Though he was obviously a profound scholar in Telugu and Sanskrit, his songs are in a soft, simple and mellifluous style. Long and involved compounds do not occur. Nowhere do we find Sanskrit words having a harsh quality. The melody of the Telugu language is nowhere more evident than in his padams. He often uses colloquial expression. His padams are full of proverbs and idioms, which belong to the common people. There is never a parade of learning. As they were intended to be sung, Kshetrajna has always a regard for euphony.

In the composition of the great masters of South Indian Music, there is no dichotomy between the sangita and the sahitya, *i.e.*, between the musical form and the literary content. Both emerge simultaneously as a finished creative work. Such composers are called vaggeyakaras. Kshetrajna belongs to that class along with Purandaradasa, Tyagaraja, Dikshitar and Syama Sastri. The aesthetic appeal of Kshetrajna's compositions is not and should not be confined to either sangita or sahitya, divorced from each other. Just as the kritis of Tyagaraja are the outpourings of the heart, overflowing with Bhakti, in words which acquire a significance in their musical clothing which otherwise they would not have, likewise the beauty of the padams of Kshetrajna, though they can be described as lyrics from the literary point of view, will be fully appreciated only in their musical setting.

I cannot refrain from dealing with the charge sometimes levelled by the orthodox section of critics that obscene passages often occur in his padams. It cannot be denied that the way in which Kshetrajna deals with the erotic theme is frank and uninhibited. In discussing this subject, one should not forget the age in which Kshetrajna lived and the idea of obscenity that prevailed then. It is thoroughly wrong to import mid-Victorian prudery into a consideration of songs composed in the 17th century. In well-known Sanskrit and Telugu kavyas, there are elaborate descriptions of a woman's figure. In avowedly erotic works like *Amaru Satakam*, there are intimate descriptions of sexual experience. This is not anything peculiar to these two languages. In ancient and medieval literature, the threshold of obscenity was not so low as it came to be after the middle of the 19th century. Here are a few passages from one of the books of the Old Testament *The Song of Solomon*, which for sheer poetic charm are almost unsurpassed.

"The joints of thy thighs are like jewels

.....

"Thy navel is like a round goblet

"Thy belly is like a heap of wheat  
Set about with lilies."

"Thy two breasts are like two fawns  
that are twins of a roe."

"Let thy breasts be as clusters of the vine,  
"And the smell of thy breath like apples

"I am a wall, and my breasts like the towers thereof."

As far as I am aware, no one has characterised these passages as obscene. The *Song of Solomon* remains to this day one of the most beautiful love songs in the literature of the world. Likewise, the padams of Kshetrajna will occupy the first rank in love poetry, though here and there we may come across passages not in accordance with modern taste and ideas of obscenity.

In the history of the religions of the world again and again, we find erotic symbolism used to expound the relationship between the individual and the supreme being. The erotic then becomes esoteric. In the Bhakti school of Vaishnavism, the erotic motif occupies a prominent place. Krishna Paramatma is the divine lover. The gopis are the individual jivatmas who seek union or merger with the Lord. This relationship is known as nayika-nayaka bhava or madhura bhava. It may be said that Kshetrajna's padams depict this relationship. A classic parallel to Kshetrajna's padams is furnished by the famous Astapadis in Jayadeva's *Gitagovinda*.

To those who are interested only in music, Kshetrajna's padams have an appeal for their exposition of raga bhava, and chowkakala; to those who are interested in poetry, his padams will appeal as exquisite love-lyrics; to those who are devotees of Sri Krishna, his padams will appeal by their portrayal of the all-absorbing passion of the gopis for Gopala.

## TALLAPAKA ANNAMACHARYA

*R.A.Jayantha*

The Tallapaka poets were a distinguished family of poets, music composers and scholars in Telugu and Sanskrit in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries who did much to popularise the Srivaishnava faith in Andhra Pradesh. Tallapaka, their native village, is in Cuddapah district. Annamacharya,<sup>1</sup> the greatest of them, was famous during his own time. It is said that he had a vision of Venkatesvara when he was sixteen and since then all through his life he composed samkirtanas or padas on Him, totalling thirty-two thousand. Of them about fourteen thousand are available now, all beautifully engraved on copper plates, and thus preserved for posterity, thanks to Annamacharya's son Pedda Tirumalacharya. This loved legacy lay hidden for centuries in a niche of Venkatesvara's temple at Tirumala to be re-discovered and brought to light only in the thirties.

The little known about Annamayya's life comes mainly from his biography written by his grandson Tiruvengalanatha *alias* Chinnanna. Annamacharya was born in 1424 A.D. to Narayanasuri and Akkamamba, in answer to their prayer to Venkatesvara for a worthy son. They belonged to the Nandavarika sect of Brahmins. Believed to be an amsa of the Lord's sword Nandaka, Annamayya was born with devotion to Venkatesvara. Even as a child he would not eat unless it was given to him as His prasada, nor would he go to sleep unless the lullaby was also about Him. Born as he was with a gift for poetry and song, the boy Annamayya would improvise songs on Venkatesvara, and sing and dance in ecstasy. Absorbed as he

<sup>1</sup> Also known as Annamayya

was in the thoughts of God, he found attending to domestic chores an intolerable interference with his preoccupation. So he ran away to Tirupati. By the time he could do the first steep climb of the Tirumala Hills, he felt exhausted and slept on a stone. Then he dreamt of Alamelumanga, Venkatesvara's consort, who told him that if he had climbed the sacramental hill with unshod feet, he would not have been tired. Then She gave him the prasada of the temple and assured him that he would see the Lord. Annamayya, as he woke up from the dream, composed extempore a sataka in Her praise. Doubly enthused, he proceeded and reached the temple where, as he beheld the Lord, he burst into a song of ecstatic praise. He has a few songs which capture something of his thrill during his first visit to Tirumala.

When Annamayya approached the sanctum the next day, he found it closed. But as he recited a newly-composed sataka on Venkatesvara, its doors threw themselves open. In later life, he was to work a few more miracles. He lived at Tirumala for sometime and was initiated into the Srivaishnava faith. Meanwhile, his people sought him out and took him home. Sometime afterwards, he was married to Tirumalamma and Akkalamma. However, his marriage did not interfere with his spiritual interests. He became a disciple of the great Vaishnava saint Sathakopayati of Ahobalam, and studied all the sacred texts. With time, his faith in Venkatesvara became deeper and mature. In Him he found not only the most accessible God, but also the immanent and transcendent God, who is the beginning and end of all pursuits and knowledge as Annamayya was to affirm in many a song later. Thus Venkatesvara became the focus of his thoughts and feelings, and the ground and granite of his very being. He dedicated himself and his talents to His service. To sing Venkatesvara's praise became Annamayya's vocation. Although he propitiated other deities like Rama, Krishna, Narasimha and Vitthala, he viewed them all as forms of Venkatesvara, the Ultimate Reality. "It does not matter whom you worship," says he in a song, "as long as you know that there is no God who is not a form of Hari."

Among the many who admired Annamayya's samkirtanas was Salva Narasingaraya, a local chieftain, who later became a

king of Vijayanagar. For some time Annamayya enjoyed his patronage and friendship, and had his share of princely pleasures and luxuries. Narasingaraya desired him to compose songs in his honour. Annamayya would not oblige him, since his tongue "used to the praise of Narahari could not bring itself to the praise of mortals". Consequently, he was fettered. But as he sang in appeal to Venkatesvara, the shackles gave way by themselves. This experience drove home to him "the futility of serving an earthly master ignoring the Best Master". It was also a timely reminder to him of his vocation. Annamayya spent the rest of his life in the service of Venkatesvara, dividing his time between Tallapaka and Tirupati. He became known far and wide for his samkirtanas. Sage Purandaradasa, who had heard of Annamayya's greatness, met him. Their meeting and their regard for each other is very impressively described by Chinnanna. Annamayya lived into ripe old age and breathed his last in 1503.

Of the dozen or more works, apart from the songs, attributed to Annamacharya, only his sataka on Alamelumanga and *Sringara-manjari*, a poem on a maiden's love for Venkatesvara, are available now. His songs are, of course, his outstanding achievement. He regarded them as 'flower-offerings' to God and himself a mere instrument singing His praise at His behest. While, through his songs, he exhorts and persuades others to seek God in Venkatesvara, the primary urge behind them is the felt creative need to give expression, as poetry and song, to his own inextricable involvement in Venkatesvara. They are, in a sense, literally samkirtanas since they all praise Him. In them Annamayya prays and praises Venkatesvara, makes love to Him, converses, argues and quarrels with Him, meditates on His many attributes, confesses his failures and apprehensions, sues for His grace, and surrenders himself to Him. Traditionally Annamayya's songs are classified into Adhyatma and Sringara Samkirtanas, although they are not necessarily mutually exclusive,

The Adhyatma samkirtanas in the main affirm the primacy of spiritual values over the purely mundane, and express the inevitable tension between these in oneself. They emphasise the need for bhakti and virakti. The following paraphrase of a song

(*Bhaktikoladi vade paramatmudu* in *Ramakriya*) suggests something of the quality of Annamayya's devotion and of his poetry. In a series of homely metaphors, he suggests the accessibility of God to the devout; "God becomes manifest to us according to our devotion to Him. As is our devotion to Him, so will He be to us. He is our Providence and Deliverer. He is, for the devout, the child that takes to whosoever invites it. He is broad daylight, an open treasure, and is ever before us. He is the butter gathered straightaway from fresh milk. He is the whetstone for the world. Beautiful in Himself, He needs no paint or colour. He is the quintessence of all speech. And He is our loving and masterful Lord."

Despite such faith tensions, conflicts and apprehensions because of the opposing pulls in himself troubled Annamacharya. Many confessional songs give expression to them. "To live and move aimlessly has been my lot. When do I learn, O God, fixity of purpose? So unsteady am I that while I inwardly desire renunciation, I seek outwardly indulgence ..." bemoans he in a song (*Kalakalamunitte Kipurapu badukaye* in *Padi*).

Sometimes assuming liberty with God, Annamayya converses with Him as a friend, and even jests with Him. Once he tells Venkatesvara, half in jest and half in earnest, that His "ways are so strange that they have neither head nor tail." Another time he playfully tells God that even He "cannot escape from the fruits of His karma."

Besides their devotional fervour, Annamayya's songs have substantial thought content. Frequently he meditates on the paradox that is God. *Visvaparakasunaku* in *Kannadagoula* is a representative example of such songs. Annamayya lists the many paradoxes of God in a series of questions suggestive of their answers—"Could there be distinctions of 'interior' and 'exterior' for One who illumines the whole universe? Whence birth and movement to Him who is eternal and fills everything?"

Temple festivities give Annamayya many occasions for song. In all of them, he sees symbolic enactment of cosmic truths. For example, in *Alara Chanchalamaina* (in *Ahiri*), as he describes



the dola of Venkatesvara and His consorts in all its magnificence, he creates a graphic image of the entire cosmos at the centre of which presides Venkatesvara. In the rhythmic swing of the dola, Annamayya sees the cosmic rhythm.

Among the songs of Annamayya available now, the Sringara-samkirtanas outnumber the Adhyatmasamkirtanas by several thousands. In them, he expresses love and longing for Venkatesvara and his surrender to Him in terms of those of a nayika for a nayaka. Probably in adopting madhurabhakti, which had already an established tradition, he was partly attempting to sublimate his own sensual nature of which he was acutely aware. However, here Annamayya speaks for himself and for others who similarly long for God, and view spiritual life in terms of *rakti* rather than *virakti*. For example, for the heroine of a song (*Kamayagamu cese kaliki*) her union with her lover becomes a kamayaga to propitiate God who is love. The Sringarasamkirtanas, through innumerable dramatic situations of love, give expression to the many splendours of love, its anguish, apprehensions and despairs, all experienced for the sake of God. The following is a paraphrase of a representative song, which tells of a virahini's condition, as reported to her lover by a maid-in-attendance: "I do not know how, but the damsel does not feel your separation at all. Whoever told her, I do not know, that space is an aspect of your greatness, she embraces it as she imagines your forms. Perhaps she heard someone say that you are everywhere. So she looks all around avidly. Since you, Venkatadhipati, have taken her to yourself at every one of her thoughts and words, we have to believe that you are everywhere."

Some songs describe Alamelumanga's love for Venkatesvara. In *Alaruluguriyaga*, (in *Sankarabharanam*) Annamayya recreates verbally every graceful gesture and movement of Alamelumanga's dance before Venkatesvara meant to please Him. *Palukutenelatalli* (in *Salanganata*) describes how the "Mother of honey-sweet speech" pleases Him by every art of love and finally possesses Him by surrendering Herself to Him. From such songs Alamelumanga emerges as the prototype of all seekers of union with God, just as Venkatesvara Himself

remains the Purusottama to be loved and sought incessantly. Generally songs using madhurabhakti tend towards mere prurience, as many such latter-day songs would show. However, Annamayya holds, by and large, the balance between the sensual and the spiritual, although sometimes it is done precariously. Usually in the latter half of each song, the sensual gets sublimated into the spiritual. To illustrate, the first half of *Javvadimettinadi* pictures admirably the voluptuous charms of the heroine. In the second half she surrenders them all to Venkatesvara and thus consecrates them.

The samkirtanas have a common structural pattern. Each song comprises a pallavi, very occasionally an anupallavi, and usually three metrically and musically identical four-line charanas. The pallavi states the theme of the song which the charanas elaborate with appropriate illustrations and analogies. Like many other devotional singers, before and after him, Annamayya freely uses the puranic lore. One is struck by the idiom of the songs, which is a happy blend of literary and spoken Telugu although he inclines towards the colloquial, especially in the sringarasamkirtanas. Homely similes, analogues and adages are countless. Consequently Annamayya's expression is always concrete, direct, spontaneous and forceful. In general, the songs exhibit a high degree of literary craftsmanship even though a good many seem to be extempore utterances rather than conscious compositions. In songs of such nature and bulk as Annamayya's, repetition of ideas and a feeling of sameness are perhaps unavoidable.

Chirma Tirumalacharya, grandson of Annamayya, praises him in his *Samkirtanalaksana* as 'Padakavitamargadarsi' and 'Padakavitapitamaha'. Posterity has endorsed this praise. But, obviously, Annamayya was not the first to compose padas nor the inventor of this form. The pada, which had been evolving over many years seems to have emerged as a distinct and standardised metrical form by the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. Annamayya's elder contemporary Sripadarayasvami and his predecessors had already used the pada form for writing devotional songs in Kannada. Annamacharya, who was probably influenced by

Sripadarayasvami in this respect, seems, as yet, to be the first writer of padas in Telugu. The pada is a difficult form to handle, bound as it is by strict prosodic rules, and meant to serve the purpose of both poetry and song. Annamayya uses it with such mastery that it becomes a habit of his mind and a flexible medium for expressing his religious and artistic sensibility. By his extensive use of it for samkirtana he established it as a respectable and independent genre, and set a model for subsequent Telugu poet-composers, of whom Kshetrajna is the most successful.

Annamayya's biographer records that when he sang, his listeners felt that he was Narada or Tumburu reborn. Unfortunately little is known about Annamayya's music or musical thought. While his poetry could be preserved, thanks to his son, his music could not be; for what reasons, it is not clearly known. Not only are there no written records of his music—perhaps that is too much to expect—but there is no living tradition of singing his songs, although for several decades after him his songs were sung daily at Tirumala and in Bhajanakutas. In the Bhajanasampradaya of South India which is traced back to him, the tradition in Tamil Nadu is said to remember still just a few pieces of his. The copper plates mention only the raga of each song. But what musical form and tala Annamayya assigned to it is not known, nor there seems to be any means of recovering or reconstructing authentically his music. He did not have the advantage of an institution like the Dasakuta which has, in a way, preserved the tradition of singing Dasarapadagalu. However, since Annamayya's samkirtanas and the Dasarapadagalu are similar in their structural pattern, and are products of the same ethos, it is very likely that they resemble each other musically also.

That Annamacharya knew all the musical modes and forms of his times is obvious from his works. But he conceived his padas as did the earlier devotional singers, primarily as devotional poetry. Music was mainly an aid to render them effectively. The kritis of Tyagaraja and others, on the contrary, are conceived generally as musical compositions, and their poetry, however impressive, is mainly a verbal scaffold for

raising a musical structure. Musical thought, rather than poetic thought, seems to determine their structural pattern. Therefore while singing Annamayya's padas, special attention to their meanings will have to be given. Naturally, their sahitya gets precedence over their music. Moreover, their somewhat tight structural pattern limits their musical possibilities, although a resourceful musician can always find scope for musical elaboration.

Annamacharya tried his hand at suladis. As yet only one of them, a desi suladi, is available which is both a talamalika and a ragamalika. It is interesting in that it begins with Malavagoula and ends with Sri. In between closely related ragas such as Ramakriya, Varali, Bouli, Padi and Nata are employed. The ragas used by Annamayya in his songs are only about a hundred. A good many of them, such as Abali, Amarasindhu, Kondamalahari, Sourastragujjari, etc., have become either rare or obsolete now. Of the well-known ragas which are in use now and used frequently by him are Mukhari, Sankarabharanam, Kambhoji, Devagandhari, Ahiri, Sri, Kedaragoula, Bhairavi, etc. Probably even these have undergone subtle changes since then. Annamacharya takes his place in the tradition of Karnataka music as a great Padakarta. He belongs both to poetry and music, perhaps more to the former, for his songs can be read and appreciated even without their music.

# TYAGARAJA

*V. Raghavan*

In several respects, the genius of Karnataka music may be said to touch its high water-mark in Tyagaraja.<sup>1</sup> The infinite play of imagination and originality is evident in him more than in other composers. In fashioning a variety of expressive forms in well-known melodies *or* in newly invented melodies, in the perfecting of the form of composition called Kriti and enriching it with inventive elements, in the poetry and philosophy of the text of the songs,—in all these, he stands out as the foremost tone-poet and as the single complete example of the genius of Karnataka music at its best and highest.

It is no wonder that in the last half a century and more, his songs have come to dominate the concerts of Karnataka music. Even among the three great composers—the celebrated trinity—himself, Muthuswami Dikshitar and Syama Sastri whose compositions threw into the background the earlier works, Tyagaraja enjoys a special popularity with musicians and lovers of music alike. His name, sometimes mentioned only as 'Ayyarval' or 'Swamigal', evokes a special sense of veneration among the votaries, active as well as passive, of the art. His anniversary is an annual festival wherever, in India or now in foreign countries too, there are South Indians.

Tyagaraja appeared in a period which was thronged with giants in the art, performers, theorists, composers, makers of dance-music, dance-drama and authors of compositions of grammatical and scientific value (Laksanagitas, Thayas, Varnas). Girirajakavi, perhaps his maternal grandfather, was a

<sup>1</sup> Also Tyagaraja

poet and composer. His guru was one of the great masters of the time, Sonthi Venkataramanayya, son of Sonthi Subbayya. With all the roads for the artists leading at that time to Tanjavur, Karnataka music was getting enriched from all sides and shaping itself through a ferment of theory and the formulation of its grammar and crystallisation of the forms of its creative expression. To have appeared amidst this throng of talent and to have outshone them with his creations is indeed the greatest testimony to his genius.

Tyagaraja was born in 1767 at Tiruvarur in Tanjavur district of Tamil Nadu. Tiruvarur is not only a renowned place in the religious history from the times of the Nayanars but was also the religious headquarters, so to say, for the Mahratta rulers of Tanjavur. Tiruvarur was also famous for the art of music and dance centering round the great temple of Tyagaraja, the dancing Siva deity at this place. Scholars and artists attached to the Telugu and Mahratta courts of Tanjavur were living at Tiruvarur. A leading Telugu writer and composer among them was Girirajakavi and it is to his daughter that Tyagaraja was born. It was after the presiding deity at Tiruvarur that the child was named Tyagaraja.

Tyagaraja's family, on the side of his father, Rama Brahmam, was living in Tiruvayyaru or Panchanada, a sacred place on the Cauvery, about 11 km from Tanjavur, the seat of the ruling Mahratta dynasty. Tyagaraja came of a Telugu Vaidika Muriginadu family named Kakaria, and his ancestors must have come from the Telugu area and settled here during the Nayak rule of Tanjavur. The name Tiruvayyaru or Panchanada refers to 'five rivers' which flow through and near this place, a centre of pilgrimage and festivals. Of the holy and beautiful Cauvery flowing here, Tyagaraja draws a fine picture in two of his songs, *Muripemu* in *Mukhari* and *Sarivedalina* in *Asaveri*. Tyagaraja loved the Chola country as he says in the first two songs referred to above: "The Chola-sima, the beautiful land in this world."

Details of Tyagaraja's life are known only from tradition, some of which could be verified from references in his songs, e.g., the names of his family and father which he mentions. Tyagaraja is said to have married twice, the first wife having

died early without any issue. To the second wife was born a daughter named Sita-lakshmi, and a son named Tyagaraja was born to her. When this grandson died issueless, the main line of Tyagaraja ended.

Tradition speaks of an elder brother of Tyagaraja named Japyesa. To glorify Tyagaraja and provide background for some songs of the composer, this Japyesa is made into a 'villain', who ill-treated Tyagaraja, disapproved of Tyagaraja's devotional activities, pressed him to seek royal patronage, threw into the Cauvery the Rama image worshipped by him, partitioned the ancestral house and so on. There must be some basis for these stories to grow; actually in two of his songs, Tyagaraja speaks of his elder brother: the *Kapi* piece *Anyayamu Seyakura*, where he prays to God to free him from the troubles given by his elder brother and *Nadupai* in *Madhyamavati*, where he refers to accusations against himself as being responsible for the partition of the ancestral house to enable him to celebrate his festivals for Rama. In two other pieces (*Nayeda vanchana—Nabhmani*. and *Etula gapadutuvo—Ahiri*), Tyagaraja mentions confrontation with his agnates (dayadis).

Tyagaraja had to face many detractors even outside his family. The single largest group of his songs—which are high-strung on the emotional side—represents what he sang in anguish of this hostile atmosphere in which he had to live. In the song *Prarabdha-mittundaga (Svaravali)*, he bemoans his fate: "Those whom I help turn against me; those whom I treat charitably level baseless charges against me." The detractors around him reviled at his devotional activities as well as his music compositions. In a number of songs, he prays to Rama to protect him from these revilers; in *Sarivarilona* in *Bhinna sadja*, he asks Rama: "Have I not been sufficiently ridiculed among my compeers? ...Is it fair on your part passively to be seeing me agonised in the midst of these wild prattlers?" All these trials, like fire, made the gold of his faith in Rama glow brighter and draw from him more and more masterpieces of moving music.

Tyagaraja had vowed to lead the life of voluntary poverty. According to the tradition of the Bhagavatas, he adopted for his livelihood *Unchavritti*, going out everyday singing the Lord's

songs and receiving handfuls of rice from householders who might feel like giving. He sang of the Lord alone and avoided Nara-stuti, praising mere man for obtaining rewards, which was prohibited according to the practice of the devotees of the Lord. Tyagaraja scrupulously observed this principle and his classic song on this, *Nidhi chala sukhama (Kalyani)* is well known. He asks here: "Does wealth (*Nidhi*) constitute happiness or does the presence (*Sannidhi*) of Rama constitute happiness?... Flattery of mere men bound in their own conceit or the singing of the Lord—which conduces to greater happiness?"

In the practice of devotion, Tyagaraja followed the cult of reciting Rama's saving name (Taraka Nama) for the prescribed number of times. Rama-worship came down in his family as mentioned by him in several songs and was strengthened by contacts with the active promoters of that path at that time like Upanishad Brahmendra of Kanchi who was a friend of Tyagaraja's father and the invitation (Srimukha) from whom is preserved in the Tyagaraja-manuscripts<sup>1</sup> handed down in the Walajahpet School of Tyagaraja's pupils. Tyagaraja himself mentions one Ramakrishnananda, a sannyasin of his times, as his guru. Tyagaraja is said to have successfully completed the repetition of Rama-Nama 96 crores of times as prescribed, and succeeded in gaining the vision of Rama.

Tyagaraja's songs embody many doctrinal ideas of this school of reciting the divine Name (Nama-siddhanta) and of the larger path of devotion, Bhakti-marga, songs which appear to have been specially composed for use in religious-musical discourses in Bhajanas, Kirtanas or Harikathas. Not only on the efficacy of the Lord's Name but also on how best to recite it, Tyagaraja speaks in his songs. In the well-known song in *Purnachandrika*, *Telisi Rama*, Tyagaraja emphasises that the recitation of Rama's Name is no mechanical muttering but should be based on a full realisation of the significance that Rama is the Supreme Being; and in another equally well-known song (*Rama neeyeda prema—Kharaharapriya*), he stresses that the uttering of Rama Nama should be accompanied by real love for Rama.

<sup>1</sup> These are now preserved by the Saurashtra Sabha at Madurai



The Ista-devata or favourite form of God that Tyagaraja sought through the *Name* and whose glory he celebrated most in his songs is that of Rama. He repeatedly declares that Rama was his favourite Deity (*Istadaivamu neeve*—in a very appealing *Dhanyasi* song —*Syama Sundaranga*); 'Rama alone is my God' (*Rama eva daivatam ...me*—*Balahamsa*); 'Who is there to equal you, O Rama' (*Rama ni samanam evaru*—*Kharaharapriya*); 'Rama alone is God' (*Vadera Daivamu*—*Pantuvrali*); and so on. This Rama is not only the avatara endowed with infinite excellence sung of by Valmiki. Tyagaraja has gone over, in his songs, the whole epic and the episodes and exploits of Rama described there; but behind all this there is the faith that Rama is the Supreme God beyond the Trinity (see his *isamanohari* song—*Manasa Sri Ramachandrani*), indeed the Para Brahman itself. In his well-known *Purnachandrika* song (*Telisi Rama*), Tyagaraja declares that the word 'Rama' is a name of Para Brahman, recalling the well-known elucidation "*Rama-padena asau param Brahma abhidhiyate*." As minstrel of Rama, by the quality and quantity of his songs on Rama, Tyagaraja takes his place in the galaxy of the great Rama-poets of India, who followed in the wake of Valmiki. Tyagaraja came of a Smarta family of Advait tradition and according to the catholic outlook of this tradition, he sang of other deities too, Siva, Devi, etc. In his song in *Chayatarangini* (*Itara Daivamula*) he says that his mind is passionately in love with Rama without harbouring any prejudice towards other deities and faiths. He believed in a Bhakti which had its consummation in the undifferentiated union with Godhead, (*So'ham-bhavana*), as he says in his song *Intakanna* in *Bilahari*.

In a large number of songs Tyagaraja expatiates on the character of true devotion and of a true devotee, on the futility of observing mere rites and rituals and other formalities and accessories like baths in sacred waters, long pujas, etc., on the necessity for ethical and moral qualities rather than for conformity to mere orthodox habits, etc. These songs, in which Tyagaraja is eloquent follow the line of the exhortations of all

the earlier saint-singers.<sup>1</sup> In the *Dhanyasi* song *Dhyaname*, for example, he points out that the best bath in Ganga is the contemplation of the Lord. He refers in *Nadachi nadachi* (*Kharaharapriya*) and *Balamu kulamu* (*Saveri*) to pretenders who bathe, fast, close their eyes, and roll the rosary. The picture of a true devotee is given in the *Begada* song *Bhaktuni Charitramu*: "O Mind! listen to the conduct of a devotee of Sri Rama! The devotee, who, without attachment to sense-pleasures, seeks Him, becomes a Jivanmukta and enjoys supreme bliss. Such a devotee should not boast of his having done japa and tapas; he should not behave or speak like a hypocrite: should not be weak, fickle-minded and lost in attachments; should not regard material prosperity as real; should never make distinction between Siva and Madhava; should make no profession out of his qualifications; should not allow the sway of rajas and tamas; should not desist from yogic practice and should never forget Sri Rama." Similarly real puja is that which is done, not with a lot of external accessories but with a complete inner dedication, an internal worship, a *bhava-puja*. He says in *Paripalaya—Ritigaula*: "My body is your favourite abode (*Puja-griha*); my steadfast mind, your golden throne (cf. also his *Manasu nilpa*); my meditation of your beautiful feet is the Ganga-water; my attachment to you is your beautiful dress; my praise of your glory, your sandal-fragrance; my remembrance and recital of your Name, the full-blown lotus for you (cf. his— *Namakusumamulache*); the fruits of all my past misdeeds is the incense to be burnt before you; my devotion to your feet is the all-day lamp to you; the very fruit of this kind of superior worship that I do is the food-offering to you; the lasting bliss that I derive is the pan (*Tambula*) for you; my seeing you (*Darsana*) is the waving of light before you. Mere scholarship is of no use (*Ksi-namai-Mukhari*) and faith in astrology leads one nowhere (*Graha-balamemi-Revagupti*). Real Bhakti alone saves and nothing else can be a substitute for it. Genuine devotion is the great royal road (*Chakkani rajamurga-*

<sup>1</sup>See my *The Great Integrators - Saint-Singers of India*, Publications Division, Government of India

*Kharaharapriya*)<sup>1</sup>. In many of these songs in which he exposes the prevailing shams and hypocrisies and emphasises the essential things as against the accessories, Tyagaraja's literary gifts, imagination, ability to develop an idea and stringing similes and gift for wit and satire come out prominently.

Tyagaraja is also remarkable for a good number of songs in which he has expatiated on Nadopasana, on the art of music as an aid to devotion and contemplation, on God being the embodiment of Nada, and the absorption in the joy of melody as itself constituting spiritual liberation, Moksha. In the exhortations in his songs, he holds up this high spiritual ideal for the musicians and condemns music devoid of devotion. For example, *Sangitagnanumu-Dhanyasi*, *Nadatanum-Chittranjani*, *Gitarthamu-Surati*, *Nadopasanache-Begada*, *Nadaloludai-Kalyanavasanta*, *Mokshamugalada-Saramati*; *Svara-raga-sudharasa*—*Sankarabharana*. In *Nadatanum*, he describes Siva as the embodiment of Nada, as constituting the essence of Samaveda and as delighting in the seven Svaras born of His own five faces. In *Nadasudharasambilanu* in *Arabhi*, he similarly portrays Rama as the ambrosial Rasa of Nada itself taken human form. "Devotion associated with the nectar of Svara and Raga is verily paradise and salvation," he declares in his well-known song in *Sankarabharana*, *Svara-ragasudharasa*. The burden of another well-known song, in *Dhanyasi*, is "Knowledge of music without Bhakti will not lead to salvation." A third well-known piece, *Mokshamugalada* in *Saramati*, shows the idea that Realisation and Release (Sakshatkara and Moksha) are not possible for those who are devoid of knowledge of music coupled with true devotion to the Lord; and the seven notes of music are manifested out of the Nada of the mystic syllable OM. "The joy of music is itself the bliss of the Brahman that the Vedanta speaks of," declares Tyagaraja in three songs: "O Mind! drink and delight in the immortal elixir of melody and attain the fruit of Yaga, Yoga, Tyaga and Bhoga; those who understand that Nada, Omkara and Svara are nothing but Siva; are verily

<sup>1</sup> For more examples and fuller treatment of this aspect, see Ch. IV on Reformist Zeal in my Introductory Thesis, *Spiritual Heritage of Tyagaraja*, pp. 84-108. second edition.

Jivanmuktas, those who have realised liberation here itself." (*Ragasudharasa-Andolika*). "O Mind! He who delights in Nada attains the bliss of Brahman." (*Nadaloludai-Kalyanavasanta*). "The body that does not float on the ocean of the ineffable bliss of Brahman called music is a burden to the earth." (*Anandasagara-Garudadhvani*).

The language of Tyagaraja's songs is Telugu but an appreciable number of his songs are wholly in Sanskrit.<sup>1</sup> The Telugu of Tyagaraja is also full of Sanskrit. He has composed a prose piece (*Churnika*) to be sung, which is also wholly in Sanskrit. His Sanskrit, like his Telugu, is marked by felicity. He is usually happy in his Yatis which add an alliterative charm, e.g. *Nidhi-Sannidhi*, *Vidulaku-kovidulaku*, *Dantunnikaina-Vedantunikaina*, *Dari-Sundari-Tripurasundari*, *Dehi-Vaidehi*, *Graha-Anugraha*, etc. At times, Tyagaraja shows a wide vocabulary, uses words in rare meanings, as also rare words for alliteration, punning and working in conceits and compounds (*Samasas*)<sup>2</sup>. All this shows that he had an adequate grounding in Sanskrit. His Telugu verses in different metres in his two drama compositions bear out his grounding in Telugu. This was to be expected in one of his family background. The material of the wide subject matter of the Ramayana is well-known to him, his songs showing his thorough acquaintance with the *Valmiki-Ramayana*. He knows also the other *Ramayanas* in Sanskrit: In his *Isamanohari* song *Manasa Sri*, he refers to chapters 3 and 6 of the Balakanda of the *Adhyatma Ramayana*. The references in *Srijanaka-tanaye* on Sita in Raga *Kalakanthi* and in the well-known *Kambhoji* song *Ma Janaki* are to the *Adbhuta Ramayana*. The *Ananda Ramayana* is also drawn upon in some pieces, (e.g. *Oka mata—Harikambhoji*) and the *Bhusundi Ramayana* in *Sarasa samadana-Kapinarayani*.<sup>3</sup> Mention of Valmiki having been a hunter, of Rama's Name being imparted by Siva to all

<sup>1</sup> See my *Sanskrit Compositions of Tyagaraja*, 34th Conference Souvenir, 1960 Music Academy, Madras

<sup>2</sup> For examples see PP. 26-30, my Introductory Thesis, *Spiritual Heritage of Tyagaraja*.

<sup>3</sup> See my *Tyagaraja and Ramanayas other than Valmiki's*, Souvenir of the 48th Conference,

persons dying in Varanasi, of Rama's greatness being told by Siva to Parvati, of the Name Rama meaning Supreme Brahman, of Hanuman under the Parijata tree reading Purana, these and several other details of this kind show that the whole literature on the Rama-cult from the *Rama Tapini Upanisad* to different Puranic and Samhita texts and the different Ramayanas in Sanskrit, as well as the version of Tulasidas whom he mentions and salutes, were quite familiar to Tyagaraja. Similarly, he must have read the *Srimad Bhagavata*, the Bible of the Bhakti-marga. A manuscript of the *Telugu Bhagavata* of Potana is among the Tyagaraja manuscripts preserved by the Walajahpet school. Upanishad Brahmendra's writings on the Lord's Name and its recitation, the idea that the Name 'Rama' is the vital essence of the five-lettered Siva-mantra and the eight—syllable Narayana-mantra—mentioned in his *Evarani* in *Kharaharapriya*,— is explained in detail by Upanishad Brahmendra in his *Upeyanamaviveka*<sup>1</sup>. Composers who were before Tyagaraja who sang en Rama and doctrines of Bhakti and Nama and on music as a Sadhana — Annamacharya, Purandaradasa, Ramadasa— were also part of the heritage reflected in Tyagaraja's songs.<sup>2</sup> Ramadasa of Bhadrachalam with his Rama-devotion and suffering stood in a special relation to Tyagaraja and is mentioned by name by Tyagaraja in his Kirtanas.

We shall now consider how Tyagaraja has constructed his Kirtanas. As on the musical side he starts on an effective phase of a Raga in the Pallavi and then unfolds the other phases in the subsequent parts of the song; on the literary side, in a more pronounced manner, he gives as the burden of the song (in the Pallavi) the central idea, expands it to some extent in the Anupallavi and then elaborates it further in the Charanas or feet of the song.

<sup>1</sup> See my edition of this text in the Adyar Library series; also pp. 126-7, my Introductory Thesis, *Spiritual Heritage of Tyagaraja*—

<sup>2</sup> See my Tyagaraja and Annamacharya, and Tyagaraja and Ramadasa in the *Journal of the Music Academy*, Madras, XXXIX, PP. 100-105; 106-11. Also, my *Forerunners of Tyagaraja in Kirtana-Composition*, Souvenir of the Rasika Ranjana Sabha, Calcutta, Thesis, *Spiritual Heritage of Tyagaraja*.

We have space here to give only one illustration, *Emi jesite nemi— Todi*. The burden of the song is the simple and central statement : "Of what avail is anything that is done by those who have not been blessed by Rama ?" In the next phase, the Anupallavi, the people devoid of Rama's grace are identified as those who are slaves of lust and other passions and incapable of knowing the commandments of Rama. In the five feet that follow, the former part of the Pallavi-idea, namely, "the variety of things that they may do or achieve" are illustratively elaborated: 1. What if they have houses and other properties ? 2. What if they perform Yagas, bring up children or, Tyagaraja adds with a grin, have adopted others' children ? 3. What if they are women's men ? 4. What if they enjoy large social status and prominence ? and 5. What if, even in the religious field, they become big gurus and can impart Mantras ? All this is of little use if Rama's grace is not there. An example of the song opening with the central idea in the Pallavi, further explicated in the Anupallavi and buttressed in the feet by a series of analogies may also be given.

We may take *Telisi Rama* in *Purnachandrika* where we also have an example of his mastery of language and sense of humor. The Palaver says: "O Mind, with knowledge and thought of Rammer, chant Rammer's name." The next phase Anupallavi augments the above brief statement with the further requirements for the proper chanting of Rama's name: "Closing the gates of the mind and realising the real significance of Rama as the Redeemer;" In the three feet follow three illustrations of how one can recite one thing and mean a totally different and base or despicable thing: 1. *Rama* (with a long syllable end, and in feminine gender) would mean an enticing woman whereas *Rama*, the correct form uttered with correct knowledge, means the Supreme Being. 2. *Arka* is the effulgent God of light, the Solar Deity, and *Arka* is also a poisonous plant the juice of which blinds one's eyes. 3. *Aja* is a poor goat as also the great God of creation. So recite with understanding of the meaning of what you recite.

For play of imagination and poetic fancy,<sup>1</sup> the foremost illustration is *Vachamagocharame* in the rare Raga *Kaikavasi*. Tyagaraja paints a miniature here: "Rama's glory is beyond words; is it possible to describe it? His arrow is such that with it he struck down Maricha and burnt Subahu. See what he did with his arrow further! Sita once looked wistfully at the long tail of a Chamara-deer; understanding her mind's desire, Rama sent an arrow at the Chamara-deer's tail; the deer wanted to save its tail and covered it with its head and turned its body, exposing the body to the arrow rather than its coveted tail, i.e., preferring to die rather than live without its pride, the tail. Rama was touched to the quick by the Chamara's reaction and out of compassion sent a faster arrow at his earlier one and cancelled it." Tyagaraja must have read the *Raghuvamsa* of Kalidasa with which all students start their studies; in X. 67 Kalidasa describes Dasaratha's hunt and in one of his pen-pictures here presents a peacock with its beautiful feathers and Dasaratha who is about to aim his arrow at it, withdraws it as he is reminded of the tresses of his beloved, bedecked with flowers. Although this, as also the *Raghuvamsa* X. 57 might have inspired Tyagaraja, the miniature as worked out by Tyagaraja is his own.

Wit, proverbs and popular sayings, etc., are a special feature of the songs of the popular preachers that the saint-singers were. Tyagaraja's songs have their own quota of these. These serve to drive home the ideas with force.

As already observed, Tyagaraja belonged to the Bhajana-sampradaya, which was at its height in the Cauvery delta at that time. In the Bhajans conducted by groups at homes or in special halls, Bhajana Mathas, they celebrated special festivals, the marriage of Rama and Sita or Krishna and Rukmini and held congregational singing of devotional songs, for all of which a pattern, *paddhati*, had evolved, starting with the announcement of the Lord's arrival (Heccharika), his taking the seat in the court

<sup>1</sup> For several examples of these qualities, see PP. 31-3, my Introductory Thesis, *Spiritual Heritage of Tyagaraja*.

hall (Kolu), the marriage which includes Gauri Kalyanam or the actual marriage, Nalangu or the divine couple in play, Harati or waving of light, Lali or enjoying the swing; laying the Lord to bed (Pavvalimpu) and the waking Him up next morning (Suprabhatam song). For use in the Puja of the Deity, as part of such celebrations, there were songs for the offering of the different Upacharas to the Deity. A set of songs was composed by Tyagaraja for use in such congregations and festivals. These songs, called Utsava-sampradaya-kirtanas numbering about twenty-seven, are simpler in setting but rich in ideas and literary quality. Of the same type and for similar congregational singing by devotees, Tyagaraja composed many other songs, about seventy-eight in number, which go by the name Divya-nama-samkirtanas. Many songs from these two groups figure now in concerts where musicians render them in the closing part of their performances.

Tyagaraja produced also two sustained story-compositions, presented in the form of a drama. In Tyagaraja's time, Bhagavatas had dramatic performances on devotional stories from the Puranas, written by distinguished composers and sung and danced before the temples in the villages on occasions of festivals. Merattur Venkatarama Sastri was an outstanding composer of such Bhagavata plays. Tyagaraja must have emulated the example of this elder contemporary of his and others of an earlier age, when he composed these two plays of his. There is, however, no tradition of these two plays of Tyagaraja having been played at any time. In modern concerts, pieces from these are sung in concerts, several especially from the *Prahlada-bhakti-vijaya*.

The *Prahlada-bhakti-vijaya*, the longer composition, takes up the Puranic story of the boy-devotee, Prahlada, son of demon Hiranyakasipu, the enemy of Hari and of Hari incarnating as half-lion and half-man (Nara-simha) and putting an end to the demon. This story is the sermon par excellence of the Bhakti tradition. Merattur Venkatarama Sastri's play on this story is a famous one, regularly enacted in some of the villages round Tanjavur; but Tyagaraja took his own line in handling this story. As is clear from the title, the play brings out the greatness of the



devotion of Prahlada. Tyagaraja follows the *Visnu Purana* version of Prahlada's story rather than the well-known version in the *Bhagavata Purana*. Visnu as the Man-Lion God is not brought in by Tyagaraja, nor any confrontation between Him and Hiranyakasipu. In fact, even Hiranyakasipu is not brought in person. The play is taken up in its five Acts with the devotion of Prahlada, the tortures he is made to undergo by his demon-father, the long exchanges of love and devotion between Prahlada and Hari, Hari protecting Prahlada, Prahlada having finally the Lord's Darsana and company and the prayers of the Gods to Lord Visnu. There are forty-five songs in twenty-eight Ragas of which no less than thirteen are repeated an-numerous interlinking passages, in verses in Telugu metres Kandapadya, Seesapadya, Dvipadi, Utpalamala and Champakamala, prose and stray Sanskrit verses. The play is set just like other Bhagavata plays.

The *Nauka-charitra*, as the name means, is Lord Krishna enjoying a boating trip on the river Yamuna in the company of the Gopis. The Gopis feel exhilarated with the pride of their beauty and their enjoyment of the love of the Lord. To bring down their pride, the Lord calls up a storm, makes a hole appear in the boat and water gush in. The Gopis lament and the Lord asks them to remove their clothes and plug the hole with them. After a time, when they surrender themselves completely to the Lord and their pride disappears, the Lord call off the storm, etc. Compositions on this theme of Nauka-vilas or Tarani-vihara are common in the devotional writings of Bengal and this tradition, as well as the familiar Vastra-paharana and Rasalila episodes in the *Bhagavata*, were used by Tyagaraja for this play. In addition to the Telugu meters used in the Prahlada-play, Tyagaraja uses here the Sanskrit Sardula-vikridita often. There are twenty-one songs, in thirteen Ragas, four Ragas being repeated. Shorter and more compact than the play on Prahlada, the *Nauka-charitra*, which lends itself to an effective production as a dance-drama, is a brilliant achievement of Tyagaraja's genius.

Tyagaraja was steeped as much in the music heritage as in the heritage of Rama-bhakti. In the beginning of his *Prahlada-bhakti-vijaya*, he salutes the saint-singers and musician-

devotees, Jayadeva, the Maharashtra saints Namadeva, Jnanadeva and Tukaram, then Tulasidas and then nearer home Purandaradasa, Bhadrachala Ramadasa and Narayana Tirtha. On the theoretical side of music, in his *Vidulaku-Mayamalavagaula*, his song of salutation to the learned writers and teachers of the past with whom Sanskrit texts on music are associated, he mentions Bharata, Kasyapa, Nandikesvara, Anjaneya, Agastya, Tumburu, Somesvara and Sarangadeva. Some expressions of the last-mentioned writer in his *Sangi taratnakara* are also incorporated by Tyagaraja in one of his songs (*Nadatanum-Chittaranjani*). He also refers to a specific text on music written as a dialogue between Siva and Parvati in the concluding part of the song on music, *Svararagasudhuras* in *Sankarabharana*.

Tyagaraja's chief contribution to Karnataka music is the perfection of the composition form called Kṛiti or Kirtana which was evolving at this time out of the older Prabandha and the immediate predecessor Pada and which comprised in itself all the aspects of music and displaced earlier and more ponderous media of rendering or preserving the Ragas in unbound or bound forms. In one of his Kritis, he describes what a Kṛiti should be like in form and content. In this song *sogasuga* in *Sriranjani* he says that the Kṛiti should be couched in words conveying the true spirit of the Upanishads, should have correctness of the musical notes of the Ragas in which they are set, should be marked by beauties of alliterations and successive increases and decreases of notes or syllables, should conduce to the cultivation of true devotion and dispassion and as literary expression, they should possess grace and simplicity and embody all the nine Rasas. He had distinguished contemporaries specialising in the same line—Muthuswami Dikshitar and Syama Sastri, but he excelled them by the all-round excellence of his creations.

Tyagaraja appeared at the crest of an upsurge of musical activity, in both theory and practice. The momentum had been set by Venkatamakhin of the closing part of the 17th century, the period of the last of the Nayak rulers of Tanjavur, Vijayaraghava. His formulation of the seventy-two Mela scheme was an event of the first order of importance. The advent of the Mahratta rulers brought new currents with the votaries of North

Indian music that came. Kings Shahaji and Tulaja, particularly the latter, knew Venkatamakhin's scheme but did not adopt it wholly. It was the Dikshitar-Ramaswami Dikshitar and his son Muthuswami Dikshitar, who took up the Venkatamakhin-thread from Muddu Venkatamakhin of Shahaji's time and gave the Venkatamakhin-scheme life and blood by composing songs in all its Melas (parent modes) and also in most of the derived Ragas (*Janyas*). But there was evidently a different scheme favoured at that time by the Telugu musicians, which came to be adopted in the compositions by Tyagaraja. And Tyagaraja's Kritis it was that made this alternate Mela scheme (Kanakangi, Ratnangi, etc.) stabilised and enduring to this day.

Tyagaraja's contribution on the musical side comprises also new Ragas, e.g. Kharaharapriya and Harikambhoji in which he gave a good number of Kritis and numerous others of which the single pieces of his are our only guide as to their forms. Not a few of these appear to be his own inventions. The names even of many of these were not known and strangely manuscripts masked their names by changing their syllabic order! In the scheme of seventy-two Melas, some are vitiated by the occurrence of the dissonant note, Vivadi-svara. Some critics in the South and most musicians and musicologists of the North discountenance the Vivadi-mela Ragas.

Even among old Ragas sung often and for long, there are at least two beautiful Ragas of this vivadi type. When giving the ten or more 'laksanas' of Ragas or points for developing Ragas, the texts give guidance for dealing with such cases, by bypassing (*langhana*) the concerned note or by taking it with *Gamaka*. One of the chief points in Tyagaraja's achievement as a composer is the artistic skill with which he has handled in his compositions the Ragas of this class, and imparted to them a form and appeal. But beyond doubt and controversy is Tyagaraja's expositions of the major and well-known Ragas of great standing, as also those that came, comparatively speaking, to prominence in more recent times. In Ragas where he has several pieces, he took off the Raga each time in a different appropriate starting note (*graha-svara*). On the whole Tyagaraja has handled in his Kritis about two hundred Ragas, and about

fifty Melas under which they come. Melas under which he has the largest number of songs are also the most common ones, Todi, Mayamala-vagaula, Bhairavi, Kharaharapriya, Harikambhoji, Sankarabharana and Kalyani. Sankarabharana, among the oldest Ragas, naturally leads with the largest number of pieces, nearing thirty; among Ragas, which came into vogue in the 18th-19th centuries, Todi and Kalyani lead with about twenty-six and twenty pieces; the next order of frequency among the older Ragas is: Saurashtra (20), Saveri (19), Bhairavi (18), Arabhi and Madhyamavati (both 15), Varali and Pantuvarali (both 15), Athana and Devagandhari (both 13), Kedaragaula, Punlagavarali and Mohana (each 11), Ritigaula, Yadukula Kambhoji. Sahana and Begada (each 10), Asaveri, Bilahari and Ghanta (the last remarkable) (each 9), Surati and Mukhari (both 8), Dhanyasi, Saranga and Balahamsa (7), Kambhoji, Nilambari and Huseni (6), Gaulipantu and Sriranjani (5), Mayamalavagaula (4) and Sri (3). Those with two or only one piece are not analysed here. In the two Ragas, which he brought into prominence, Kharaharapriya has 13 songs and Harikambhoji, 9. The two newcomers Kapi and Darbar (not free from controversy) have twelve and ten pieces.

The most remarkable feature of Tyagaraja's compositions is the 'variations' or Sangatis which they embody in the very opening of the Pallavi. These Sangatis synthesise, so to say, the bound and unbound forms by providing for improvisation within the framework of a fixed tune and setting. This Tyagaraja picked up doubt from Pallavi-singing on the one hand and from the improvisations in dance-music on the other where variations are done for abhinaya to bring out of different phases of the basic feeling. By grafting it on to his Kritis, Tyagaraja gave scope for the singer to bring out not only the total phases of the Raga of the song but also the emotional phases of the meaning of the prominent idea of the text of the song as given in the Pallavi.

Some well-known and oft-sung masterpieces of his, which open with this cascade of Sangatis may be recalled: *Sakkani raja marga*, *Rama ni samana*, *O Rangasayi*, *Na jivadhara*. But the Sangatis form a part of all his songs, so much so that they have come to stay as part of Karnataka music itself and even the

Kritis of other masters like Dikshitar which belong to a different style and aesthetics are rendered by musicians in the same 'sangatised' style.

Although Tyagaraja has some songs in the slow tempo, the medium one is his chief characteristic tempo. The medium tempo (Madhyama-kala) is also an adjunct of this Sangati-style and that tempo has also become the prevailing one for Karnataka singing and even Dikshitar's music which is in the Vainika style in slow tempo, with Gamakas as its life, is also spurred up to the middle and fast tempo. In fact, all Kriti-composition of the post-Tyagaraja composers, like Pattanam Subrahmanya Iyer, is after Tyagaraja's model. Thus, as in the case of Kalidasa, we may say of Tyagaraja too: "All that was before him was thrown into the-background; all that came after him has been on his model."

According to tradition, Tyagaraja is said to have composed several thousands of songs but this is, as usual, an exaggeration. What we have is less than a thousand; actually about six hundred and seventy five are known with text and tune. Among these, from the purely musical aspect, we have different degrees of artistic aim or elaboration or excellence displayed. Reference has been made to the class of songs intended for congregational singing, in which the text dominates and the musical setting is simpler.

There are other pieces, most of them small, falling often in prosodic rhythmical patterns, which even youngsters, can sing. There are other short pieces which are quite lively but not overlaid with or providing scope for elaboration, which a clever and mindful performing artist uses in his concert, in between heavy or long drawn songs, to 'ginger' up his performance. On top are the Kritis in which words are few and just over two words of the text like *koluvaiyunnade*, the whole melody of Bhairavi could be poured and poured! Here is the forte of Tyagaraja.

Special reference should be made to five long compositions of Tyagaraja in the five Ghana Ragas used traditionally for Tana— (Nata, Gaula, Arabhi, Sri, Varali), which have attained

some special status as the 'five gems'—Pancha Ratnas. Structurally they are distinct. They are like the Svarajatis, with a series of passages of alternating Svaras and Sahitya with a secondary Pallavi as in Varnas.

It is said that Tyagaraja composed these diverse kinds of songs to suit the pupils who came, with differing qualities of voice and equipment. Whether that is so or not, the variety that his compositions show is there and this invests his creative work with all-round brilliance.

Despite his detractors already referred to, Tyagaraja's compositions attracted wide attention and spread to distant places. Tyagaraja undertook some pilgrimages, although not on the scale and with such avowed purpose as Muthuswami Dikshitar did. Except the invitation to come to Kanchi from Upanishad Brahmendra, there is no other evidence to show why he started on the pilgrimage. We do not know at what age he started out but if we can infer from his Todi song *Dasarathi*, this must have come some time in the late middle stage of his life. For Tyagaraja thanks Rama in this song for his having spread his (Tyagaraja's) songs and fame in distant parts. The itinerary took him to Tirupati, Tiruvottiyur near Madras, Kovur, another small place in the neighbourhood of Madras where Sundaresa Mudaliar of that place received Tyagaraja, and Kanchi, in the northern parts of Tamil Nadu; and in his own Choladesa, he visited Sirkali, Nagapattinam, Lalgudi near Tiruchi, and Srirangam. There are about forty songs of Tyagaraja on the deities in the shrines in all these places, some of which are famous and popular in concerts.

In the Todi song mentioned above, Tyagaraja gives expression to his gratification that in his own lifetime and with his own eyes and ears he enjoyed to his satisfaction the appreciation that his songs had gained in distant parts of the country. Tyagaraja realised the aim, ambition and mission of his life. In his *Epaniko (Asaveri)*, he speaks of the purpose for which he was born, namely, to sing of Rama; and in *Daya chuchutaku (Ganavaridhi)*, he again gives vent to his joy that he had carried out with care and to his heart's content the mission that the Lord has entrusted to him. It is not possible for all artists

to achieve this satisfaction during their lifetime. In keeping with his advaitic tradition and following several of his predecessors who illumined, in his part of the country, the three paths of Advaitic Jnana, Bhakti and music—Narayana Tirtha, Sadasiva Brahmendra, his elder contemporary Upanishad Brahmendra and his own teacher Ramakrishnananda, Tyagaraja took to Sannyasa towards the end of his life. In two of his songs (*Giripai* in *Sahana* and *Paritapamu* in *Manohari*), he refers to Rama's promise to him to bestow Moksa on him.

His Sannyasa is certainly one of the elements that added to the halo of his personality and responsible for the annual observance of the day of his Samadhi. Tyagaraja attained Samadhi on January 6, 1847 (Pusya Bahula Panchami). At his Samadhi in Tiruvayyaru where a shrine has been built by his devotees, his anniversary is a sacred day for all musicians who make their pilgrimage every year to this place and pay their homage to the master by singing his songs there. In fact, there are several ardent followers of his, who observe his day, wherever they are, every month on this fifth day of the dark fortnight (Bahula Panchami) on which he passed away, assemble and sing his songs before his portrait.

Through his direct disciples, three schools, traditions or styles of rendering his Kritis established were the Umayalpuram school which is the best and most widely represented, the Tillaisthanam school and the Walajahpet school. The last-mentioned played a part on the eve and the turn of the present century in bringing to light Tyagaraja's compositions and leading to their increasing vogue in the concerts. But for the emergence of Tyagaraja, and along with him, of his two contemporaries, Muthuswami Dikshitar and Syama Sastri, Karnataka musical heritage might not have been consolidated in the recent past and handed down to us. Taking their stand on the tradition, these men of genius saw into the future, and therefore, although two centuries have rolled by since Tyagaraja appeared, he continues to be, to this day, the mainstay of Karnataka music. The 'Dura-desa' (distant parts of the country) where, according to his own song (*Dasarathi* in *Todi*), his music has been made famous, is today a continuously expanding world.

## MAHARAJA SVATI TIRUNAL

*S. Venkitasubramonia Iyer*

Svati Tirunal of Kerala was composer par excellence of Karnataka music. The richness and variety of his compositions, their poetic beauty and devotional fervour and the wide range of aesthetic patterns they present, entitle him to an exalted place among the composers of India.

He was born in Trivandrum on April 16, 1813, to Rani Lakshmi Bai and Rajaraja-Varma Koil Tampuran, of the royal family of Travancore, renowned for its scholarship and patronage of arts and letters. As there was no male heir to the throne at that time, he was acclaimed as Garbhasriman, a king even before birth. He was named Rama Varma and had the hereditary title 'Kulasekhara', but is popularly known as 'Svati Tirunal' after the asterism under which he was born, in accordance with the practice prevalent in the royal families of Kerala. He lost his mother quite early in life, but under the affectionate care of his maternal aunt Rani Parvati Bai who acted as his Regent, and the guidance of his saintly father he grew up into an ideal prince.

A liberal education was imparted to him by a team of able scholars led by the versatile Subba Rao of Tanjavur, who later became the dewan of the state. Subba Rao was proficient in music and its different styles and this led to the efflorescence of the latent musical talent in his royal disciple in due course. Kseerabdhhi Sastri, a famous Advaita scholar of the time, initiated the prince into the study of philosophy.

Svati Tirunal formally assumed charge of direct administration on April 21, 1829 and ruled the state for seventeen years, putting down corruption with an iron hand and introducing far-reaching



reforms for the advancement of the people at large. His reign was marked by all-round progress and it laid the foundations for Travancore to be a model state. Munsiff's courts were established, a Code of Regulations was framed, a revenue survey and settlement of lands was undertaken, a census of the people of the state was conducted, an observatory was erected, a separate Department of Public Works was organised, the allopathic system of medical treatment was introduced, and above all, realising the value of the English language and the wealth it has got to offer to modern knowledge, an English school and a public library were started. Arts and literature were greatly encouraged and artists and poets rewarded with munificence unparalleled at that time. The state was prosperous and the people contented and happy.

But towards the close of his life, the Maharaja was not so happy. The British Crown had recognised him as a sagacious ruler and appreciated his progressive measures but General Cullen who became resident of the state in 1840 developed a hostile attitude towards him and began to interfere in the administration. Deaf in ear and blind in spirit, the General could not see eye to eye with the Maharaja, particularly with regard to the expenditure incurred in fostering fine arts, and he started sending adverse reports to the British Government. Svati Tirunal had the courage to show him his place, but the remonstrance was not of much real avail. Thereupon he surrendered himself at the feet of Lord Padmanabha, his tutelary deity, and led the rest of his short life in prayer and meditation, practically detached from the world. He left the mortal coil on December 25, 1846.

Needless to say, it is as a composer of classical music that posterity cherishes most the memory of Svati Tirunal. This is due to the enormous quantity and the high quality of his musical output. But before turning our attention to this rich treasure, it is necessary to examine the factors that revealed his musical genius and moulded its manifold expression.

There were several musicians, and some composers too, in the Travancore court, many of them adept in the *sopana* style of singing, characteristic of Kerala. Irayimman Tampi, the celebrated author of the beautiful lullaby *Omanattinkalkitavo*, sung in spontaneous expression of the joy at the birth of his patron-prince,

was one among them. His songs, which are of considerable literary charm, always delighted the young prince. Karamana Padmanabha Bhagavatar was another. From him he learnt the early lessons in music. But, as stated before, his keen aptitude for music was largely roused by Subba Rao. He learnt the North Indian instrument Svarabat from Subba Rao himself and mastered the Karnataka and Hindustani systems of music from experts invited over at his instance.

Soon creative skill began to manifest itself. He came to hear the kirtanas of Margadarsi Sesha Ayyangar. Their devotional content and the musical structure with a pallavi, an anupallavi and three or more charanas, attracted him. The Sanskrit language in which they are written and the literary embellishments they bristle with, added to the attraction. Taking them as his model, he began to compose kirtanas; and based on the principles of alliteration and rhyme found in them, he wrote a tract in Sanskrit named *Muhanaprasadivyavastha*.

The great wandering musician of Kerala, Satkala Govinda Marar, whose performance before Tyagaraja is believed to have inspired the saint to compose his Pancharatnakriti *Endaro mahanubhavulu* was in the court of Svati Tirunal for some time. He had a repertoire of Tyagaraja's songs. Their scintillating beauty kindled in the Maharaja's mind the desire to invite the musician-saint to his court and pay him homage. His attempt at this did not prove fruitful, but a disciple of that great composer, Kannáyya Bhagavatar, came and settled in Trivandrum and delighted the king with his master's songs.

The death of the distinguished patron of arts, King Sarabhoji of Tanjavur in 1832, made many of the musicians in his court seek the patronage of his worthy compeer in Trivandrum, some of them voluntarily and others on the persuasion of persons like Subba Rao. Among them were the famous Vadivelu and his brothers known as the 'Tanjore Quartet', who influenced the Maharaja a great deal in his musical activity in form and technique. Vadivelu was a disciple of Muthuswami Dikshitar and with him came to Travancore the majestic songs of this masterly composer in Sanskrit language. He was a reputed dance-master also and through him were brought several dancers and dance-

troupes from Tanjavur. This gave Svati Tirunal the incentive to compose the forms of dance music like Varnas, Padas, Svarajatis and Tillanas, some of them with the collaboration of the Quartet. The Western instrument violin, pioneered into Karnataka music by Vadivelu, gained easy recognition as a concert instrument in the royal court and brought him the present of a beautiful ivory violin from the Maharaja.

A Maratha saint-singer named Anantapadmanabha Gosvami alias Merusvami and called *Kokilakantha* because of his sweet and high-pitched voice, came to Trivandrum in 1836. He was a votary of nadavidya and an expert performer of harikathakalaksepa. Svati Tirunal accepted him as guru and got himself initiated into the secrets of higher music. Under his influence he also composed the *Kuchelopakhyana* and the *Ajamilopakhyana*, both of them in the Sanskrit language but in Marathi forms and tunes according to the Harikatha style.

The liberal patronage which music enjoyed in the Travancore court attracted many Hindustani musicians and dancers. The impressionable mind of Svati Tirunal imbibed the excellences of the Hindustani system and attempted compositions in that also.

All this resulted in his vast and varied contribution which, while bearing testimony to these influences, bears also the stamp of his individuality. The known compositions of Svati Tirunal number about 400 and comprise practically all the forms of Karnataka and Hindustani music. They are found in five languages: Sanskrit, Malayalam, Hindustani, Telugu and Kannada. They are all devotional in nature and almost all of them have his mudra Padmanabha, sometimes with the part padma substituted by a synonym. Most of them are in well-known ragas, but we also find rare ragas like Gopikavasantam, Suddhabhairavi, Purvakambhoji and Lalita-panchamam. North Indian ragas like Khamas, Bihag, Hamir-kalyani, and Kapi are also found freely adopted. The talas used are the common Adi, Chapu, Rupaka, etc. Some of these songs preserve certain rare prayogas of particular ragas.

Among the Karnataka types it is the kirtana that is the largest in number. Svati Tirunal's kirtanas cover a wide range from very

simple kirtanas like *Paripahi ganadhipa* in Saveri to *Rasa-vilasa* in Kambhoji with its lofty flow and intricacies of *chittasvara* interspersed with jati. They comprise pieces in fast tempo like *Sara-saksa* in Pantuvarali as well as pieces in slow tempo like *Jagadisa sada* in Natakurinji. They are in praise of different deities, mainly Padmanabha. A group of nine kirtanas called Navaratnamalika expound the nine-fold path of bhakti, and another similar group called Navaratrikirtanas contain nine songs, six on Sarasvati and three on Durga, to be sung during the annual Navaratri festival. There are some songs like *Karanam vina karyam* in Kambhoji and *Smara haripadaravindam* in Sama which are in a philosophical vein. *Bhavayami Raghuramam* in Saveri, which is of late being rendered as a ragamalika, is an epitome of the Ramayana, and *Bhavaye Srigopalam* in Punnavarali, that of the Bhagavata.

As a composer of Varnas, Svati Tirunal is unrivalled. He has to his credit about 30 of them, a noteworthy achievement when we consider the abundance of imagination and the mastery of melodic nuances which each one of them demands. They comprise tana-varnas as well as chowka-varnas and stava-varnas as well as pada-varnas. Some of them like *Chalamela* in Sankarabharanam and *Sarasijanabha* in Kambhoji, both in the stately Ata tala, are among his masterpieces and are perfect specimens of this musical form. The varna Sumasayaka in Kapi presents certain innovations like sangatis or progressive variations in the pallavi and the form of a ragamala in the last charana. These varnas have always been popular in Bharatanatya. To the class Pada he has contributed over 70 songs. Being primarily meant for abhinaya they beautifully portray the different aspects of sringara or love in all its delicate shades clothed in appropriate ragas to delineate the particular ideas and emotions. *Alar-saraparitapam* in Surati, *Sakhi he ni gamikka* in Sankarabharanam, *Kantanotu channu* in Nilambari are a few of the most popular padas. Svarajatis and Tillana are also essentially dance-forms of music, and they generally pertain to nritta or general dance as distinguished from abhinaya. Svati Tirunal has composed several of these and among them the *Pancharagaswrajati* beginning with *Sa Ni Sa Re Sa* in Kalyani raga is well known.

Among Prabandhas (sustained musical story poems), besides the Kuchelopakhyana and Ajamilopukhyana mentioned earlier, we get Utsavaprabandha written in Malayalam in song mixed with verse, describing the festivals in the Sripadmanabhasvami temple in Trivandrum.

The musical type called *Ragamalika* with its characteristic sectional chittasvara and concluding viloma-chittasvara, also has its contribution from him. The two pieces Pannagendrasayana and Kamalajasyahrita are well known. The one is a pada in theme and the other, a kirtana. The first is particularly noteworthy. In eight sections it delineates the feelings of a love-lorn lady awaiting her lord in the different parts of night in appropriate ragas beginning with Sankarabharanam, the raga of nightfall, and ending in Bhupala, the raga of daybreak.

Svati Tirunal was the first South Indian composer to contribute to the Hindustani system. There are about 40 songs of his in this category and we get among them Dhrupad, Khayal and other forms including a ragamala. *Ramachandraprabhu* in Sindhubhairavi, *Chaliye kunjanano* in Vrindavanasaranga, etc., are well known.

This royal composer thus made a significant contribution to both the main streams of Indian music. This is doubtless a unique achievement. The one was as dear to him as the other. With rare catholicity of outlook both were accorded equal treatment. His court musicians represented a cross-section of the whole of India. Along with Irayimman Tampi of Trivandrum and Paramesvara Bhagavatar of Palghat, there were among them, in addition to those mentioned before, Sulaiman Sail of Tanjavur, Gopalarayar of Madhyarjunam, Matrubhutayya of Tiruchirapalli, Alauddin of Mysore, Kasiganga of Hyderabad, Sacchidananda of Poona, Ramarjuna of Punjab, Lakshmanadas of Gwalior, Sukhadev of Ayodhya, Gaudavasudeva of Banaras, Haridas of Bengal and a host of others. Without distinction of caste or creed all of them were encouraged and treated as equals and paid incredibly high salaries. His court was a demonstration of the truth that music, and for that matter any genuine art, is unbounded by region or religion and its vast potentials can make it a powerful force in national integration.

Although unlike his contemporary composers like Tyagaraja and Dikshitar, the Maharaja had no disciples, his songs attained great popularity as can be seen from their occurrence in several anthologies of music. The charm of the varnamettu or musical pattern of some of these compositions inspired duplicate sahityas. Such for instance are *seve syananduresvara* by Irayimman Tampi for *Pahi mam sri vageeswari* in Kalyani, Sringara lahari by Mysore Lingaraja for *Anandawalli* in Nilambari, *Samini rammanave* and *Sarasa ninu* by the 'Tanjore quartet' respectively for *Sa vama rusha* in Khamas and *Sumasayaka* in Kapi, and *Pannagadrissa* of uncertain authorship for *Pannagendrasayana*. The Padmanabhasvami temple largely preserves the original music of Svati Tirunal.

It was not music alone among the fine arts that was enriched by the Maharaja by his substantial contribution and unstinted patronage. The other arts also found a generous patron in him. Several dance-troupes came to him from all over India and got presents. Some of them were taken into the permanent service of the Palace. Painters of all styles were encouraged. A European artist was paid Rs.12,000 for a portrait, an astounding sum indeed in those days. Some families of ivory carvers were settled in Trivandrum and an artistic ivory throne was made by them. A beautiful chariot for royal processions was devised and constructed. Two monuments of architecture, the Puthenmalika and the Rangavilas Palace, came into being at his instance.

And not only arts. Literature also got its due share from the scholar-monarch. Like the musicians, poets and scholars from far and near visited his court and they were all suitably honoured. His own poetic works like the *Padmanabhasataka*, *Syanan-durapuravarnanaprabandha* and *Bhaktimanjari* bespeak his wonderful command of the Sanskrit language and profound knowledge of our religions and philosophic lore and exemplify his literary ability.

Svati Tirunal lived but a short life, and it was one full of responsibility. Still he was able to serve the muse and serve her in both her forms, poetry and music. And his achievement is remarkable. He has given us a treasure which no rasika can afford to neglect.

## SYAMA SASTRI

*P./Sambamoorthy*

Syama Sastri belongs to the Trinity of South Indian Music, the other two members of the Trinity being Tyagaraja (1767-1847) and Muthuswamy Dikshitar (1776-1835). A new chapter in the history of South Indian Music begins with the Musical Trinity. Sangita Kavithvam (creative music) reached the acme of perfection in their hands.

Syama Sastri was born at Tiruvarur (also called Srinagar) in Tanjavur District in Tamil Nadu on the 26<sup>th</sup> of April 1762. In the year 1781, he came to Tanjavur along with his father and settled down there.

Syama's ancestors were not musicians; nor did they encourage the study and practice of music in their family. So much so, that when as a lad he mastered the rudiments of music from his maternal uncle in a very short time, nobody took any serious notice of it. No one dreamt that this lad of eighteen was destined to give to the world those immortal kriti compositions in a style peculiarly his own. Although he was gifted with a very melodious voice, the idea of giving a good musical training to him never occurred to his parents. But Nature plans Her own methods for the training of Her chosen ones.

Even as the divine minstrel Narada came in the guise of a sannyasi and initiated Tyagaraja in the mysteries of music by presenting him with the works *Svaranava* and *Naradiya*; even as a sage in the person of Chidambaranatha Yogi came to Muthuswamy Dikshitar to inculcate the secrets of true music, so also a sannyasi in the person of Sangitaswami came to Syama Sastri, to initiate him into the mysteries of Tala and Raga.

Sangitaswami was adept in the art of music and dance. This Swami was an Andhra Brahmin and in the course of his pilgrimage came to Tanjavur. Since the Chaturmasya period had just then commenced, he was obliged to stay in Tanjavur and spend the period of four months there.

At the invitation of Syama Sastri's father, one day the Swamiji came to his house and had bhiksha there. After the bhiksha, the father introduced his son to the distinguished guest. The Swamiji at a moment's glance noticed that the young person had rare musical talents. He immediately predicted the future greatness of Syama. The father thanked the Swamiji for his kindness in responding to his invitation and requested him to bless his son.

From the next day onwards, Sangitaswami bestowed special attention on the musical training of Syama and taught him the intricate mysteries underlying the raga and tala prastaras. Having acquired real scholarship in Telugu and Sanskrit languages under the able tutelage of his father, and possessing a keen intellect and a rare capacity to grasp even the most subtle and difficult branches of the science of music, Syama was just the pupil to receive instruction in the higher branches of the art from the great guru, Sangitaswami. He made amazing progress and soon mastered all the intricacies of the raga, tala and swara prastaras. The guru in great joy presented him with some rare musical granthas (works) which were a mine of information on gandharva vidya.

Towards the close of the Chaturmasya period, the master said to his pupil:

"My dear Syama, you have learnt enough of the sangita sastra (theory of music). Now it is time you listened to a lot of good music. I would particularly suggest that you cultivate the friendship of Pachchimiriya Adiyappayya, the Asthana Vidwan of Tanjavur Samsthanam, and listen to his scholarly music as often as possible." So saying Sangitaswami blessed his pupil and resumed his pilgrimage.

According to his guru's advice, Syama Sastri made the acquaintance of Adiyappayya, who in his time was adored as the king of musicians.



Syama Sastri soon acquired great name and fame as an expert musician-composer. His scholarly musical compositions, consisting mostly of kritis and svarajatis, brought on him the warmest encomiums even from the most uncompromising critics of his time. In the art of manipulating the intricate time measures he had no equal. He was able to handle the apurva ragas with as much ease as the more common ones. His first kriti "Janani Natajana Paripalini Pahi mam Bhavani" (Saveri raga) in Sanskrit reveals the genius of the rising composer.

Syama Sastri had a majestic appearance and a commanding personality. He had a fine complexion and always wore a pure white, slightly lace-bordered cloth. The saffron mark on his forehead, his Rudraksha Mala mounted in gold round his neck, his diamond ear-rings, his bright coloured shawl, his silver-mounted walking stick, his beautiful slippers all contributed to his impressive personality. Nobody who saw him even once forgot him. As he passed along the streets the people seated on the pials of the houses on both sides got up and paid respects to him. "Truly he is the king of musicians" exclaimed everyone. Such was the reverence and regard which one and all had for him. Tyagaraja and he were good friends.

The historic musical contest between Syama Sastri and Bobbili Kesavayya in which the former sang a Pallavi in Sarabhanandanatala as a counter to the Pallavi in Simhanandana tala sung by Kesavayya, and emerged victorious has been remembered in tradition. Sarabhanandana tala comes to be known for the first time through his Pallavi. An avarta of this tala takes  $19\frac{3}{4}$  matras or 79 aksharakalas. The 24 angas figuring in this tala in their order are: guru, laghu, drutam, laghu, laghu drutam, anudrutam, laghu viramam, drutam, drutam, drutam, anudrutam, laghu drutam, laghudruta viramam, laghu viramam, drutam, anudrutam, drutam, anudrutam, drutam, laghu viramam, drutam, druta viramam, laghu drutam. There is an appropriateness in Syama Sastri scoring a victory over Simhanandana tala Pallavi with his Pallavi in Sarabhanandana. After God Narasimha slew Hiranya and sucked the blood of the rakshasa, He became furious. The Devas quaked with fear. Just at that time Paramasiva took the form of Sarabha, (Bird, animal and human blended into one) and

relieved Narasimha of the rakshasa's blood by sucking it and restored tranquility to Him and the world.

Syama Sastri was a highly creative artist. His compositions are of sterling worth. They are in common ragas like Todi, Dhanyasi, Kambhoji, Yadukulakambhoji, Sankarabharanam and Kalyani and in uncommon ragas like Kalagada, Karnataka Kapi, Manji and Chintamani. He has adopted an attractive style in his kritis. His Sahityas are principally in Telugu and a few are in Sanskrit and Tamil.

He is the architect of the musical form, Svarajati. This was originally a dance form but Sastri converted it into an attractive musical form by eliminating passages of jatis or bols. His three svarajatis (a) Rave Himagiri-kumari (Todi raga—Adi tala (b) Kamakshi Anudinamu (Bhairavi raga-Chapu tala) and (c) Kamakshini Padayugame (Yadukulakambhoji raga-Chapu tala) stand unparalleled both for the delineation of the raga bhava and the fecundity of the musical ideas. In the Bhairavi svarajati the commencing notes of the eight charanas will be found to be in the ascending order to pitch Sa, re, ga, ma, pa, dha, ni, sa. He has incidentally illustrated herein the nature of the arohana sthayi paddhati of raga alapana. In the Yadukulakambhoji svarajati the last charana is concluded with a makutam (crown-like ending) of three phrases of varying magnitude Khandam (5), Misram (7) and Sankirnam (9) R g S/m g r s n d p/m grsndpmg. This apparently complex grouping fits in very nicely into the texture of the composition and forms a fitting finale. These three svara-jatis form a ratna-traya. (Three gems).

Sastri has given the modern shaping to the Anandabhairavi raga. Anandabhairavi is an old raga. There are folk melodies and also lullabies in it. A perusal of the mediaeval compositions in Anandabhairavi will reveal the fact that many strange phrases which are now considered taboo, occur in them. The gita "Kamala Sulochana" contains many archaic prayogas i.e. phrases which will no more be considered as appropriate and valid in Anandabhairavi. Bhadrachala Ramadas has also introduced in one of his songs in Anandabhairavi raga the phrases Sa re ga ma ga re sa in the tara sthayi. Ramaswami Dikshitar, the father of Muthuswamy Dikshitar, has introduced the prayoga pa ni sa in the

Chittaswara to his kriti "Amba ni Saranamu Jochchiti". Paidala Gurumurthi Sastri has introduced the phrases P n N S in his gita Pahi Sri Ramachandra in this raga. Syama Sastri steered clear of the track and gave the picture of Anandabhairavi as it ought to be. With the emergence of the raga Abheri, the phrase Pa ni sa has no place in Anandabhairavi. Syama Sastri's kritis (1) O Jagadamba, (2) Pahi Sri Giri Raja Sute, (3) Mariveregati and (4) Himachalatanaya Brochuta and the varna "Samini rammanave, Sarasakshi I vela" (Ata tala) are splendid compositions in this raga and mirror the varied and colourful aspects of Anandabhairavi. Anandabhairavi has been considered as his Sotthu i.e. as his property. The polished nature of his music is one of the attractive features of his compositions. Some of his compositions apart from their high entertainment value, have also a lakshana value. In the art of composing Swara-sahityas, Sastri stands without a parallel.

He delighted in incorporating rhythmical beauty in his compositions. There is not even the slightest suggestion of any artificial element in the introduction of those rhythmical colourings. The key phrase in the field of rhythm is Ta dhim gi na Tom a phrase of the magnitude of 5 aksharakalas. The kriti 'Meenalochana Brova' in Dhanyasi raga and which belongs to the group 'Navarat-namalika' starts after the pause of the duration of Ta dhim gi naTom. This is a very unusual feature in a musical composition. In his kritis, we find many words constituted of 5 syllables, (answering to Ta dhim gi na torn) coming naturally. As examples of such words may be mentioned:

- |                  |                  |                 |
|------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| (1) Anudinamu    | (2) Durusuganu   | (3) Gatiyanuchu |
| (4) Japamulanu   | (5) Kamalamukhi  | (6) Kamalayuga  |
| (7) Krupasalupu  | (8) Mahimalanu   | (9) Mahimavini  |
| (10) Samayamidi  | (11) Sarasamukhi | (12) Saranamani |
| (13) Pogadutaku  | (14) Padayugamu  | (15) Tarunamidi |
| (16) Varamosagu. |                  |                 |

Syama Sastri has popularised the Viloma (reverse) type of chapu tala. The normal chapu tala takes the sequence 3 plus 4. His composition Mari vare gati in Anandabhairavi is in the normal

chapu tala. The viloma chapu tala takes the sequence 4 plus 3. His compositions Ninnu vinaga mari in Purvikalyani raga and Triloka matha nannu in Pharaz raga are very good examples.

He has composed a few kritis which are suggestive of two rhythms. That means the composition can be reckoned in either of those two rhythms and without prejudice to musical effect. It is, however, clear that one of the rhythms was intended as the inherent rhythm and the other as the suggestive rhythm.

The inherent rhythm is the Sthapita tala and the suggestive rhythm is the Suchita tala. Taking the composition, Sankari sankuru in Saveri raga as an example, the Rupaka tala will be the Sthapita tala of this song and Adi tala (Tisra Gati) will be the Suchita tala of this song. That the composer intended both these rhythms is clear from the fact that the Pallavi and Anupallavi conform to the Rupaka tala on their very face and the charana conforms to the Adi tala (Tisra Gati) in an equally clear manner.

Atita-anagata complexities are also seen in his kritis. Syama Sastri had a rhythmical frame of mind and he was always swimming in the ethereal regions of rhythm and tala prastara. No other composer has composed songs answering to the rhythmical beauty referred to above.

Svaraksharas occur in many places in his kritis. Svarakshara is the beauty signified by the confluence of the svara syllable and the identical or like-sounding syllable in the sahitya or words of the song. It is a structural beauty. As examples may be mentioned the following:

(1) In the kriti Devi brova samayamide in Chintamani raga in the first charana we find the phrase: Nidasudu gada. Here in *nida* is the svarakshara part.

(2) In the Kambhoji kriti Devi ni, in the phrase Pada sarasa, Pada sa occurs as svarakshara.

Syama Sastri was Devibhakta. The main source of inspiration to him was Bangaru Kamakshi, the Deity of the Temple in Tanjore. He has also composed nine kritis in praise of Minakshi,

the Deity of the Temple in Madurai. This group is called Navaratna-malika. The more well known compositions of this group are :—

Name of the song	Raga	Tala
Sarojadalānetri	Sankarabharanam	Adi
Devi Minānetri	-do-	Adi
Nanubrova Lalita	Lalita Misra	Laghu
Minalochana Brova	Dhanyasi	Chapu
Mari Vere gati	Anandabhairavi	-do-
Devi ni pada sarasa	Kambhoji	Adi
Mayammayani	Ahiri	Adi

He signed his compositions with the ankitam Syama Krishna. His style of musical writing has been compared to the Kadalipaka.

Syama Sastri had two sons: Panju Sastri and Subbaraya Sastri. Of these, the latter became a fine composer. He had training in music under his own father and later under the great composer Tyagaraja. The kritis of Subbaraya Sastri are noted for the brilliant setting of the Svara sahityas, i.e. chitta svaras with the addition of appropriate Sahityas. Syama Sastri passed away on February 6, 1827 in his 65th year.

## MUTHUSWAMY DIKSHITAR

*T. L. Venkatarama Aiyer*

South India has a rich heritage of classical music. Many are the composers who have contributed to it. Of them three are prominent and are popularly known as the trinity. They are Syama Sastri, Tyagaraja and Muthuswamy Dikshitar. They were contemporaries and their period is rightly regarded as the golden age of classical Karnataka music.

Muthuswamy Dikshitar was born at Tiruvarur in 1775. His father Ramaswamy Dikshitar was himself an eminent musician and composer who had undergone training in music under Muthu Venkatamakhin, a scion of the family of the great Venkatamakhin, the author of the music treatise *Chaturdandi Prakasika*. One of his kritis, *the Ragamalika* in 108 Ragas and Talas is unique of its kind and is a masterpiece.

For a long number of years no child was born to Ramaswamy Dikshitar. It is said that the Devi Balambika to whom he offered worship and prayed for a son appeared before him in a dream and presented him with a pearl necklace. Within a year thereafter a son was born to him and that was Muthuswamy. Muthuswamy was a precocious boy. He learnt music under his father and became proficient in both vocal and veena music. He also became a scholar in Sanskrit.

At this time, the Zamindar of Manali near Madras came to Tiruvarur on a pilgrimage and was so impressed by the music of Ramaswamy Dikshitar that he invited him to be his court musician. Dikshitar agreed and so the family shifted to Manali and settled down there. During this period the zamindar who was closely connected with the East India Company, used to take

Muthuswamy Dikshitar along with him to the Fort St. George and there Dikshitar had occasion to listen to Western music played by the British Band. What use Dikshitar made of it will presently be seen. While at Manali, one Chidambaranatha Yogin, a Sannyasin who had initiated Srividya in Ramaswamy Dikshitar came over there and the latter invited him for Bhiksha. On that occasion Muthuswamy Dikshitar was asked to sing and play on the Veena to him. The Swami listened to his music with rapt attention and was immensely pleased with it. After the Bhiksha was over, the Yogin told Ramaswamy Dikshitar that he was going on a pilgrimage to Kasi and that he would like to take Muthuswamy with him as his Sishya. After a good deal of hesitation Ramaswamy Dikshitar agreed and sent his son with the Yogin to Kasi.

In the company of the Yogin, Muthuswamy Dikshitar stayed in Kasi. During this period the Yogin initiated him to the tantric form of worship of the Devi and to the practice of yoga, and also taught him the Upanishads. The songs of Muthuswamy Dikshitar bear a deep impress of this learning. Apart from this, the stay at Kasi had also a profound influence on his music. He had opportunity, there, of listening to and learning Hindustani music first hand and in its purity; and this knowledge is reflected in the style and quality of his music. Muthuswamy Dikshitar spent about six years in Kasi as the Sishya of the Yogin. One day when they came to the Ganga for bath, the Yogin said to Dikshitar: "Muthuswamy, get into the Ganga three or four steps down and tell me what you get." Dikshitar did as directed and to his surprise he got a Veena with the word Rama inscribed on it. He showed it to the Yogin who said, "So Ganga has blessed you; you will be a great Vinita." This Veena is still with the members of his family. After this, the Yogin got into the water for bath, and did not reappear. After a fruitless search Muthuswamy Dikshitar realised that the yogin had attained Mukti. He then returned to the South.

He came to Manali only to find that his parents had left for Tiruvarur. The idea then struck Dikshitar that he might visit the shrines in the locality before returning home. He went first to Tiruttani and there sat before Lord Subrahmanya in contemplation of His glory and repeating the Shadakshara Mantra. One day at

noon after all the pilgrims had left, while he was sitting alone, an elderly man appeared before him and said "Muthuswamy, open your eyes and tell me who I am". Dikshitar sat merely gazing at him silently. Then he put something in his mouth and asked him, "Tell me what it is." Dikshitar said, "Sir, it is sugar candy." But by then the elderly man had disappeared and instead there appeared before Dikshitar the vision of Lord Subrahmanya seated on a peacock with Valli and Devasena by His side and the form gradually disappeared into the Sanctum sanctorum. Dikshitar concluded that the old man who had appeared before him was no other than Lord Subrahmanya and that the Prasadam which He gave him was Jnana (knowledge). So he hailed him as his Guru and burst into music in praise of Him. There are eight pieces which he sang on this occasion. They were his first songs.

From Tiruttani Dikshitar went to Tirupati, Kalahasti, Kancheepuram, Chidambaram and other holy places, composing songs in praise of the deities there and then went to his home at Tiruvarur. There he settled down and lived with his father till 1817, when the latter died. What Muthuswamy Dikshitar saw at Tiruttani had produced a deep impression on him. Even before that the training which he had received from Chidambaranatha Yogin had given him a strong spiritual outlook and a discipline of mind and body unusual at that age. The vision of the Lord at Tiruttani made him completely God-minded. Thereafter he always thought of God, spoke of God, worshipped God. He dedicated his music to the praise of God. His daily life was simple. He rose in the early hours and practised yoga and then performed pooja. He would then visit temples and sing the songs composed by him on the deities. He would then teach music to his sishyas. In short, he lived the life of a saint.

Dikshitar was not in affluent circumstances and had often to struggle against poverty. But he never yielded to the temptation of singing the praise of men and earning money. Many are the anecdotes which are related to illustrate this, but it is sufficient to refer to one of them. While he was at Tanjavur his wife pressed him to sing the praise of King Serfoji, who was reputed to be a munificent patron of arts. Dikshitar declined and wrote a kirtana in which, echoing the sentiments and even the language of the Sri



Sukta, he said that he would worship Lakshmi who could give him imperishable wealth and not seek small men. (Hiranmayam Lakshmi in Raga Lalita). He sang the kirtana in the Rajagopalaswami temple and that very night Lakshmi appeared before him in a dream and blessed him. This appears in his kirtana, 'Mangala Devataya" in Raga Dhanyasi.

The fame of Muthuswamy Dikshitar as a great composer soon spread all around and he received many invitations for visiting the numerous sacred places in South India. Dikshitar readily responded to them and travelled far and wide, visiting Famous shrines and writing songs on the deities there. Indeed his life can be described as one of life-long pilgrimage to temples. In this respect he is placed alongside the Saivaite saints who sang the Tevarams and the Vaishnavaites who sang the Prabandhams; he sang of all the deities, Saivaite and Vaishnavaites, without distinction. While he was at Tiruvarur, some persons from Madurai invited him to go over to that place and sing songs on Meenakshi and teach his kirtanas to the musicians there. Dikshitar promised to do so later, and on their suggestion he sent his two younger brothers, Chinnaswamy and Baluswamy, with them to Madurai to teach his compositions. Dikshitar then left for Tanjavur. There he spent a number of years in the company of Syama Sastri. It was during this period that Ponniah, Vadivelu and then brothers learnt music under him. They became subsequently famous as court musicians and dance-masters in Tanjavur and in Trivandrum and as composers.

Muthuswamy Dikshitar then left for Madurai. There he learnt that one of his brothers, Chinnaswamy, had died and that the other had left for Rameswaram. Dikshitar spent some months in Madurai and composed several Kirtanas in praise of Meenakshi and Sundareswara. Then he started on a journey to Rameswaram and visited, en route, Azhagar Koil and sang the Kirtana "Shri Sundararajam" in praise of the deity there. Then he went to Rameswaram and there composed songs in praise of Ramanatha and Parvatavardhini and also visited Darbhasayanam and sang "Sriramam". At Rameswaram he learnt that his brother Baluswamy had been there, that the Raja of Ettayapuram who had come there had liked his music and had taken him along as his

court musician. So Muthuswamy Dikshitar started on a journey to Ettayapuram.

It was then midsummer, and Dikshitar had to travel through dry regions. Feeling thirsty he stopped at the outskirts of a village and taking rest under a tree, he asked his sishya to go into the village and fetch drinking water. Shortly thereafter his sishya returned along with the local magnate, who prostrated before him and presented him with fruits and drink. Dikshitar asked him about the famine conditions prevailing there, to which he replied that the country had been undergoing great sufferings owing to continuous droughts. Dikshitar immediately went into the temple in that place and performed Pooja to the Devi and sang a kirtana 'Ananda amrithakarshini' in Raga Amrithavarshini and finished with an invocation "Varshaya, Varshaya, Varshaya" (Pour rain, pour rain, pour rain). A miracle happened; clouds gathered and there were heavy rains which gave relief to the whole locality.

Dikshitar then resumed his journey to Ettayapuram. The news of his arrival had preceded him. The enlightened Maharaja was waiting with his paraphernalia a mile in advance of the town to give him a fitting reception. Baluswamy Dikshitar, the brother of Muthuswamy Dikshitar, was seated by the side of the Maharaja. Dikshitar was overwhelmed with joy at the sight of his brother and was delighted to know that he was going to be married shortly. The Maharaja of Ettayapuram, who was himself a composer of classical music, requested Dikshitar to settle down at Ettayapuram as his Guru. Dikshitar had an only daughter whom he had given away in marriage, so he decided to live with his brother at Ettayapuram. While there, he visited the famous temples of Subrahmanya at Tiruchendur and at Kazhugumalai and of Kanthimati and Salvatiswara in Tirunelveli and of Sasta at Sabarimalai and several other shrines. He wrote kirtanas on the deities in all these places.

His end came some time in the month of Tula in the year Manmatha, 1834, September-October. An elephant of the Ettayapuram Palace called 'Gangeya' became wild and breaking all fetters, marched to the cremation ground and stood there. The Maharaja who heard this was alarmed, thinking that it foretold some calamity. So he straightaway went to Muthuswamy

Dikshitar and relating to him what had happened, asked for his blessings. Dikshitar went into contemplation and in the Samadhi had a vision of Annapurneswari of Kasi. He remembered what Chidambaranatha Yogin had told him, that She would give Mukti to him and so concluded that his end was near. He opened his eyes and told the Maharaja: "Maharaja, no harm will come to you." Then the Maharaja asked: "Will any harm come to my Kingdom?" "No", said Dikshitar. The Maharaja went away in great delight. Then Dikshitar performed Pooja as usual and thereafter the sishyas assembled and began to sing. He asked them to sing the piece "Meenakshi me mudam". After they had finished, he told them: "Sing it again. It looks as if the Devi will give me Mukti." They sang again and when they were singing "Meenalochani Pasamochani" in the Anupallavi, he quietly shuffled off his mortal coil. The royal elephant also then left the cremation ground. The Maharaja who heard the news returned sorrow-stricken, and paid his last homage to him and had him cremated at a place specially chosen. His Samadhi can be seen at Ettayapuram even today. That, in brief, is the life-story of Muthuswamy Dikshitar.

Turning now to the music of Muthuswamy Dikshitar, the most outstanding quality is its richness of Raga Bhava. It is this that gives him a place among the great composers of India. It should be noted that the concept of Raga is the most distinctive contribution of India to the world of music. Beautiful songs are to be found all the world over but the notion of Raga as distinct from a song is distinctly Indian. "Raga" is a sound picture, a melody, which has distinctive features differentiating one from other melodies. Those who are brought up in the tradition can distinguish one melody from another as easily as they can one person from another. Indeed our tradition considers Ragas as divine personalities.

Tyagaraja describes Nada as the body of Lord Siva. Muthuswamy Dikshitar describes Devi as of the form of the twenty-two Srutis and Swaras. The featuring of Raga, Raga Alapa, has always been considered to be the highest form of art music. It transcends words and consists of Akara-sounds and when syllables are used in the rendering of Ragas, they are non-

**significant and serve only as aids in portraying the Raga. Now the greatest merit of the songs of Dikshitar is the featuring of the Raga-forms in all their purity and richness.**

**Dikshitar shares with Tyagaraja the distinction of having handled the largest number of Ragas. In familiar Ragas like Todi, Bhairavi, Sankarabharana, Kalyani and Kambhoji, he has, like Tyagaraja, composed a number of songs bringing out the beauty of the Ragas in all their aspects. Then there are certain rare Ragas for which we get a complete picture in the kirtanas of Dikshitar. Such are, for example, Mangalakaisiki, Ghanta, Gopikavasanta, Narayana-Gaula and others. Then again there are many Ragas which live only in the kritis of Dikshitar, as for example, Chayagaula, Poorvi, Padi, Madhuri, Sudha Vasanta, Kumudakriya and others. Dikshitar has composed kirtanas in all the 72 Mela Ragas and what is of special interest in them is that in rendering the Vivadi Melas he has, following the Gitas of Venkatamakhin, avoided Sam-purna scales in Arohana and Avarohana, and has thus avoided dissonant and discordant Sancharas. As examples, the kirtana in Kanakambari in the first Mela and Kalavati in the thirty-first Mela, might be mentioned.**

**In appreciating the music of Dikshitar it should be remembered that he was primarily a Vainika and vocal music was rendered only to the accompaniment of Veena. To this must be ascribed two of the distinctive features of Dikshitar's music: firstly his songs are mostly in Vilambakala (slow tempo) with a few Madhyamakala Sancharas (medium tempo phrases) towards the end and secondly they are rich in Gamakas (graces). There is a limit within which the tempo can, consistently with Raga Bhava, be accelerated in Veena, and there are many Gamakas which can be rendered in excelsis in that instrument.**

**The handling of Hindustani Ragas by Muthuswamy Dikshitar is another notable feature of his music. The Karnataka music has at all times been enriching itself by adopting and assimilating Hindustani Ragas. That process can be seen in the compositions of Purandaradas and Venkatamakhin. These Ragas, however, had as a result of isolation, suffered some changes in Karnataka music. Muthuswamy Dikshitar had, during his stay in Kasi, acquired firsthand knowledge of these Ragas and his rendering of**

them is more faithful to the original, and has elicited appreciation in Hindustani music circles. His compositions in these Ragas are among the masterpieces of Indian music. Such, for example, is the piece 'Jambupate' in Yamunakalayani, 'Parimala Ranganatham' in Hamirkalyani, 'Rangapuravihara' in Brindavana Saranga.

The influence of Hindustani music can be seen not only in the Ragas handled by Dikshitar but also in the Gamakas used by him. Some of them like Jaru, for example, though common to both systems, figure prominently in the Hindustani music and Dikshitar also has made good use of them.

While the influence of Hindustani music on the music of Muthuswamy Dikshitar was immense, that of the Western music was limited. One Mr. Brown, a Collector, liked so much the rich and sonorous Sanskrit Sahitya in his songs that he requested him to clothe English songs in Western music with Sanskrit garb. Dikshitar took up the tunes which he had heard played by the Band in Fort St. George, Madras and gave them a Sanskrit Sahitya in praise of the Hindu gods. Thus "God save the King" became "Santatam pahi mam, Sangita Syamale". There are about 50 songs like this in which Sanskrit Sahitya has been substituted for English words.

Like Ragas, the "Talas" of Indian music are one of its distinctive features. There can be no great composition without a command over them. Dikshitar was a master of Talas and is the only composer who has written kirtanas in all the seven basic Talas of the Karnatak system.

Turning next to the textual contents of the songs, they are all in praise of the deities and their Rasa is Bhakti. But the Bhakti is informed by Jnana (knowledge) and the emotional appeal is subdued and undemonstrative. Dikshitar was steeped in the Vedanta as interpreted by Sankaracharya and that may be thus summed up: The Creator, the Parabrahma, is one and omnipotent; He transcends Name and Form; all the deities worshipped are only manifestations of the Parabrahman; the object of their worship is to enable us to withdraw our minds from attachment to the material world and concentrate upon a Form conceived as divine; and the Saguno-pasana (worship of personal God) is but a

step in the realisation of the Nirgunabrahma (impersonal Absolute) within us. It is with this mental approach that Dikshitar visited the shrines of all the deities and sang their praise. The songs contained both these elements; there are personal descriptions of the deity and these are followed by a description of It as transcending Name and Form. A typical description is that of Santanaramaswamy as "Saguna-Nirguna-Swarupam". It can easily be seen that with this approach there is no room for those emotional outbursts which move and thrill us in the songs of Tyagaraja. There is a calm and repose in the kirtanas suggestive of Brahmananda. The Vilambakala in which the songs are cast is well suited for this Bhava. To hear Dikshitar's music is to forget all our materialistic affiliations and to lose ourselves in bliss.

Dikshitar believed that worship of the deities and Pooja would discipline the mind and give it a spiritual bent. He was a devotee of the Pen and his Navavaranakirtanas are an impressive expression, in Music, of the Tantric worship. He has also composed Navagraha kirtanas in praise of the planets. In brief all the three courses, which are prescribed for spiritual development—Karma, Bhakti and Jnana, had a place in his daily life but he gave the pride of place to Jnana.

Then as regards the Sahitya of the songs, they are for the most part in Sanskrit and a few in Telugu and Tamil. Given the nature of the music in the kritis of Dikshitar, nothing could be more appropriate than the adoption of Sanskrit by him. In the songs of Tyagaraja emotion plays an important part and that is why he has generally adopted Telugu as the proper vehicle of expert expression. But in the songs of Dikshitar it is aesthetic excellence of the Raga Sancharas that plays a dominant role. In his kritis the Sahitya has a value not so much for its sense as for its tonal quality. For richness of sound Sanskrit is unmatched and that is why Dikshitar has preferred it. The music of Dikshitar has a grandeur and sublimity all its own and that is due in no small measure to the Sanskrit diction which he adopted. And further it is only Sanskrit that can bring out adequately the transcendent Vedantic concepts expressed in his songs.

Dikshitar shows his knowledge of Sanskrit. He has composed songs in all the eight Vibhaktis (cases). It has sometimes been

said that his Sahitya lacks poetic quality. But one should remember that in music the emphasis is not so much on the sense as on the tonal quality of the words. There might be good poetry which makes poor music, and conversely good music which might lack poetry. Dikshitar has paid special attention to sound values and has used Sabdalankaras such as Prasa and Anuprasa for that purpose and has also used certain Alankaras such as Gopuchha and Srotovaha for enhancing the musical value of the songs. For illustration, reference may be made to the songs Tyagaraja yoga vaibhavam, Maye, and Srivaralakshmi.

To conclude, for richness of Raga Bhava, for sublimity of their philosophic contents and for the grandeur of the Sahitya, the songs of Dikshitar stand unsurpassed. And when we find that he has a mastery over not merely Karnataka music but also over Hindustani music, and that he has composed songs not only on the shrines of South India but also on Viswanatha, Visalakshi, Annapurneswari temples of Kasi, on Ganga and on Pasupatiswar, the realisation must come to us that he is a composer for all India and for all times.

## **AMIR KHUSRAU**

*Chaitanya P.Desai*

**Culture, says Professor MacIver, is the expression of people living and thinking in everyday intercourse, in art, in literature, in religion, in recreation and enjoyment. That is why one feels that the composite character of Indian culture is its own explanation.**

**In the eleventh century, in the reign of Ghaznavis, Lahore became a center of Persian culture. Free intercourse became possible between Persia, Afghanistan, Transoxania, Khurasana and Punjab. Persian was the language of communication and of office. Turko-Persian nobles, scholars, artists and saints migrated first to Punjab and then to Delhi, Gujarat and finally up to the Deccan, carrying with them the elements of Persian culture. As a result of their long stay in India, they also absorbed some elements of the Indian culture and a fusion of the two cultures took place. This is reflected by the paintings and architecture of that era. The saints who migrated to India generally belonged to the Sufi sect and their Sufism became moulded after the Indian fashion.**

**Some Persian musicians were in the service of the Sultans and Mughals of Delhi and so Indian music had the chance to assimilate impressions of Persian music. Persian contact is felt mainly in the North, somewhat in Gujarat and to a lesser extent in the Deccans.**

**This so called Indo-Persian culture which attained its highest phase in the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries in the time of the Mughals, waned gradually after them. But even today we find signs of this fusion in the doctrine of Sikhism and in Urdu poetry. No doubt, the Khari Boli, which later developed into Hindi, was also a result of this.**



Amir Khusrau the poet, was the foremost visionary of that age, and contributed most to the fusion of the two cultures. Khusrau's ancestors were Turks – “Hazara” of Lachin, a warrior clan who had come from Transoxania or Khorasan, and stayed in India for several generations. Amir Khusrau was born in 1253. His mother was of Indian origin. Khusrau's father Amir Saifuddin Mahmud, a noble, was in the military service of Samsuddin Iltutmish. The family was settled at Patiyali, a small town in the district of Etah, otherwise known as Muminpore or Maminabad. Khusrau's maternal grandfather was “Rawal-Ard” i.e. in charge of the royal horses. He also held the emblem of authority in political matters. Khusrau had two brothers. From a tender age he was given personal lessons in theology and Koran, besides regular lessons in Persian language. He was also taught Arabic, logic, and some fine arts, notably calligraphy and poetry. About the latter he himself has stated : At a tender age I began to compose verses that roused the admiration and wonder of my elders.<sup>1</sup>

His upbringing and participation in the society of the learned afforded him wholesome opportunities to listen to intellectual discourses of erudite scholars, recitals of poetry and repertoires of reputed musicians. Khusrau was a born poet. His compositions won him willing princely patronages, even at the young age of twenty. He served as poet –laureate to at least six Sultans, the last being Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq.

In 1284, Khusrau became a full-fledged Sufi under the tutelage of the famous Chishtiya Sufi saint Nizamuddin Auliya and henceforth, his heart was set on things beyond worldly intrigues and ambitions.

The saint soon conceived a strong liking for Khusrau. Khusrau applied all his thoughts to the realm of spiritual bliss and devotion, and his association with the saint gave his poetry a new strength and vigour, a divine glow and fire.

Some years later, the 95 years old saint died after a long illness. Khusrau heard the sad news when he returned to Delhi from Oudh and the final separation broke the heart of the aged poet. It is said that on hearing the news, he rent his garments,

<sup>1</sup> Dr.M.W.Mirza, *The life and works of Amir Khusrau* (Calcutta 1935), p.20

blackened his face and recited the following couplet at the grave of his master and fell down in a swoon:

"Gori sowe sej par, mukh par dare kes,  
chal Khusro ghar apne, rain bhayi sab des!"

Khusrau declared that he would soon join his master, according to the latter's prophecy. In a few days, Khusrau also died. According to his master's wish, his body was buried outside the cupola of the saint's grave. Both the graves have become a place of pilgrimage. Khusrau's grave bears the following inscription:

"Mir Khusrau, the king of poesy's realm, the ocean of accomplishment and sea of perfection".<sup>1</sup>

Devotees visit and worship both the shrines, by strewing flowers and lighting lamps on them. Qawwals hold Khusrau as their master. We also come across some traditional dhrupads and Khyals, in praise of saint Nizamuddin, such as:

"Tu hai mommādasā darabar,  
Nizamuddin sujaan" etc.

Two more Khyal geets in Raga Purbi in praise of Auliya are as follows:

- (i) Charan parasat eri anand.
- (ii) Aiso pir jara jarojar baksan  
Nizamuddin Auliya, e dhan dhan.

Persian verse in India began to be written in the age of Ghaznavi by poets who migrated to India or were born in India. Khusrau speaks very highly of one or two of his predecessors. But Amir Khusrau was the greatest of them all. His fame spread far and wide, even to Persia. He has composed nearly sixteen works of poetry in Persian. He wrote his best poems at the ripe age of sixty.

Five of his long poems are based on historical themes in which he describes military campaigns and gives interesting details about the country and particularly about Delhi. He was not a historian, still he has thrown much light on the social conditions of the time and has given a general picture of the country. One

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, pp.134-136, 138

poem *Ashiqā*, deals with the love-story of Khidrakhai and Dewal Rani, the captured princess of Gujarat, and is full of the poet's patriotism and love for his motherland. Another poem, *Aina-i-Sikandari*, descriptive of the campaign of Alexander the Great, gives much information about various inventions of Greeks such as sun-meter, looking glass, cotton tents, etc.

In his poetry, he has also expressed his thoughts about common people and common things. In his poem *Ghurrat-ul-kamal*, he has addressed some stanzas to such persons as the fisherman, tavern keeper, weaver and tailor.<sup>1</sup>

Khusrau was also a prolific writer of Persian prose. He has compiled three prose works. One of them *I'jaz-i-Khusravi*, is a voluminous work, containing five chapters, the last one being written at the age of seventy. In the work—*Tarikh-i-Alai*, he has described the historical events of Ala-ud-din's first sixteen years of reign. According to Firishta and Nizamuddin, the poetry in Hindi (or 'Hindui') was composed as early as the time of Mahmud of Ghazna. The old biographers and anthologists mention that Khusrau had also composed poems in Hindi. Recently a small collection of Khusrau's Hindi poems has been published. But there is no proof that these poems, vulgar and funny, were composed by Khusrau and the authorship is disputed by modern scholars on linguistic grounds. This does not mean that he did not know Hindi well or did not use it in daily talk. His statements show that he knew Hindi better than Arabic and he was also proud of it. At one place he says:

"I am an Indian Turk and can reply to you in Hindi. I have no Egyptian sugar to talk of Arabia and Arabic. As I am in fact the parrot of India, question me in Hindi, that I may talk sweetly".<sup>2</sup>

Khusrau's writings give ample proof that he was a lover of music and knew Persian and Indian systems and perhaps practised both to some extent. Being in the court service for a long time, he had numerous opportunities to listen to good music and he was also intimately acquainted with many musicians. Thus he was a

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, p. 166

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, pp.227-228

great connoisseur of music. About his knowing the science of music, he himself has said at one place: "If I were to write on music, I could have composed three volumes on that science too."<sup>1</sup> One chapter of his work *I'jaz-i-Khusrawi* deals with music, musicians and musical instruments of his time. He has mentioned one female musician, Turmati Khatun, who became the head of the royal music department, through the influence of Khusrau. The names of musical instruments he has given are as follows: Abab-rud, Rabab, Tanbur, Nay, etc. The names of the court musicians he has mentioned are: Mohammad Shah, Kunjashk, Khalifa Husaini Akhlaq, etc.<sup>2</sup> Among these Mohammad Shah was a chang (Kanun) player.<sup>3</sup> It seems from the description given by Khusrau that the Delhi Sultans patronized Gazal-Qawwali music more than classical Indian music. This writing on music by Khusrau does not throw much light on the musical system of his time or his knowledge of it.

Some authors of old give credit to Khusrau for introducing Persian melodies and blending Indian Ragas with Persian airs and making innovations which revolutionised the Indian music. The writer Shibli, in his *Shir-ul-Ajam* says : "Khusrau's versatile genius turned to this fine art too and raised it to such a degree of excellence that he has remained unrivalled during the long period of six hundred years." The same writer has narrated the contest between Khusrau and the famous Southern musician, Gopal Nayak. Shibli has also given a list of Persian melodies, which were mixed with Indian Ragas by Khusrau to form new Ragas but the mixing seems to be imaginary.

Wajid Ali Shah, in his *Saut-el-Mubarak* holds Khusrau as the Nayak of Khyal and inventor of Tarana. He further declares:

"Khusrau's inventions destroyed all the regulations and instruments established for a thousand years, while his disciples in their audacity vied with the Kalavants, the representatives of the old system, that dates back to the time of Mahadeo." Needless to say, the statements of these writers are exaggerated and baseless.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, p. 146

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p.218

<sup>3</sup> Elliot, *History of India*, Vol III, p.566

Khusrau, who has described commonplace incidents and details of his life and work, would not have kept silent about his great achievements in the art of music. Abul Fazal in his *Ain-i-Akbari* says, "Kowl and Taraneh were composed by Amir Khusrau with the assistance of Samut and Tetar. They are a delightful mixture of the Persian and Hondive style". (The translation is by Francis Gladwin.). These Samut and Tetar must be musicians. It is remarkable that Abul Fazal, Raja Khan, Fakirulla and all the Urdu writers on music have followed the Hindu system and not Persian. Some writers hold Khusrau to be the inventor of the instrument Sitar. But the name Sitar is not found in the works of Khusrau or of his successors. Though fretted string instruments have been mentioned by Abhinavagupta (tenth century) in his commentary on *Natyasastra*<sup>1</sup> the traditional Raga-music in the form of Dhrupad singing was in full swing at the time of Akbar the Great, and dominated the field of music up to the 18th century when the Khyal style began to emerge from it slowly.<sup>2</sup> Dhrupad style was in vogue also in the Deccan at least up to the time of Ibrahim Adilshah of Bijapur (1580-1627). Persian music until today is far below the standard of Indian Raga music and so the former has nothing of importance to impart to the latter. But at the time of Khusrau and thereafter, some Persian melodies, to which Khusrau's Qawwalis were set up, must have been adopted by Indian music and it is possible that Khusrau might have been responsible for their introduction. Sarangadeva, the contemporary of Amir Khusrau, has mentioned two such melodic forms of Turkish origin, viz., Turushka-Gaod and Turushka-Todi,<sup>3</sup> which I guess to be the current Ragas, Yaman and Todi, respectively, two of our best Ragas.

Khusrau himself was also of the opinion that Indian music was far more developed than and superior to the music of any other country, as he has stated in his work *Nuh Sipihr* (the nine skies):

"The musical system originated in India. And Indian music, the fire that burns heart and soul, is superior to the music of any other country. Foreigners, even after a stay of 30 to 40 years in

<sup>1</sup> G.D.S. Vol IV, p.18

<sup>2</sup> See my article on Khyal, Music Academy Journal, Madras.

<sup>3</sup> *Sangeet Ratnakar* (Adyar, first edition), Vol I p.92, 97

India cannot play a single Indian tune correctly. Indian music charms not only men, but beasts too"<sup>1</sup>. On another occasion, some musicians had come from Khorasan and Khusrau wanted to invite Indian musicians to compete with them, so that "The dove-pigeons of Bala should know how the Indian birds sing". It is also possible that the Qawwali music which was developed at the time of Khusrau, had borrowed some peculiarities of Persian style, viz., some shades, twists and even tanas and these peculiarities might have penetrated into Khyal style. But some hundred years must have been required for the process of this assimilation, as the Khyal style established its personality in the 18th century. Therefore, it will be wrong to hold Khusrau as the Nayak (master) of the Khyal style. Certainly, he was not the innovator or even promoter of the Khyal style, as is generally believed. As Khusrau himself realised Indian music to be superb and perfect, he would have never thought of meddling with it.

Khusrau was a religious man. He had a sense of humour, carried his sorrows lightly, could see what was ridiculous and laughed at it, yet he showed no malice. He had few racial, religious or social prejudices, but had more tolerance which was a rare quality in his age. He was, no doubt, proud of his Turkish descent, but at the same time, he loved India. It was but natural that he had a contempt for the conquered race and for their rites and temples. At the same time, he is touched by their grievances and admires their devotion and faithfulness. He has praised the warlike exploits of their conquerors. He was generous with his money. As he had no prejudices, he acquired popularity. He did not like falsehood and hypocrisy. He had many friends, and he was sought after and liked by everyone. The assembly seemed as if lighted by his presence. He had to pass from one patron to another, tune his lyre to a different tune every time and to sing praises of a murderer as those of his victim! But he should not be judged solely by such odes of his.<sup>2</sup>

Khusrau had not said much about his family life, but we can know from his writings that he was married happily and had several children, whom he loved. He also speaks tenderly of his

<sup>1</sup>Dr.M.W.Mirza, *The life and works of Amir Khusrau* (Calcutta,1935), p.185

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p.233-234

brother and his children. He has addressed a whole chapter of *Hasht Bihisht* to his daughter. But he loved and cared for his mother the most.<sup>1</sup> Khusrau loved the country, its sky, moonshine, the stars, its flowers, its dark beauties, its language and learning. In his work *Nur Sipahr* he has put forward the following arguments to prove the superiority of Hindu knowledge:

"Why, some may ask me, all this preference for India? But, what praise can there be for what has already been so highly praised? ..... I know that in this land lie the wisdom and ideas beyond dispute. Greece has been famous for its philosophy, but India is not devoid of it. All branches of philosophy are found here: logic, astrology, dogmatic theology, in fact, every science, except 'faqr' (sufism) is found. Though they do not believe in our religion, many of their beliefs are like ours. They believe in the unity and eternity of one God, His power to create after nothingness, etc... They worship, no doubt, stones, beasts, plants, the sun, but they recognise that these things are creations of God..... Knowledge and learning are common and widespread among them. They can speak all the languages of the world. Learned men from all parts of the world have come from time to time to study in India, while no Brahmin has ever travelled to any place outside India".<sup>2</sup>

This statement of Amir Khusrau is indicative of his liberal thinking and greatness of heart! We can even go so far as to consider Amir Khusrau as the emblem of national integration.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p.235

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* pp.183-185

# TANSEN

*K. C. D. Brahaspati*

Historical information about Tansen, the great musician, who lived in Akbar's court and was considered a rare jewel, are found in many historical memoirs and writings from which much authentic information has been gained. Of these writings the most significant are those written during the reigns of Akbar and his son Jahangir. During Shahjahan's reign too, there were some discerning lovers, scholars and musicians who had known Tansen and the tradition and style of his music. These accounts constitute valuable material for the assessment of Tansen's genius and personality in the proper historical perspective.

Tansen's parentage, place of birth and religious affiliations have different versions—a queer mixture of the imaginary and the authentic. An attempt is made here to give a correct estimate of Tansen the man, and Tansen the musician. In addition to historical writings bearing on the subject, reference also will be made here to a rare collection of Tansen's compositions in the Gwalior tradition.

In his book *Ain-i-Akbari*, Abul Fazal has enumerated many categories, groups or classes of musicians, among which are mentioned Dharhi, Qawwal, Hudakiya, Dafzan, Natawa, Kalawant and Kirtaniya. The last alone were called by Abul Fazal as Brahmins. In this classification the title Kalawant is a special category representative of expert, professional musicians. <sup>1</sup>In works like *Ain-i-Akbari*, *Tarikhe-Muhammadi* and others, Tansen has been designated as a "Kalawant" or "Kalaunt". It may be mentioned here that Brahmins as a community never adopted

<sup>1</sup> *Ain-i-Akbari*, translator, Gladwyn, p.134, Section 2



music as a lucrative profession of a mercenary kind as it was forbidden by the sacred Smritis. To the Brahmin, from time immemorial, music was primarily a means of devotion, and only secondarily a profession.

According to *Ain-i-Akbari* Tansen belonged to Gwalior.<sup>1</sup> In one of his Dhrupad compositions also Tansen has praised that place,<sup>2</sup> as Garh Gopachal (Gwalior). According to tradition, Tansen was born in a place called Behat near Gwalior.

Tansen's date of birth has been a subject of endless controversy. In this respect, the available historical evidence can be stated thus:—

(a) According to Abul Fazal, before 1562, Tansen was in the service of Raja Ram Chandra of Rewa and was thinking of retirement.<sup>3</sup> In that age of health and vigour, Tansen must have been an active man of seventy years of age at that time. This leads us to the reasonable surmise that he must have been born around 1492 or so.

(b) It is said that in 1575 or so Tansen's voice had become very discordant and harsh<sup>4</sup> probably due to extreme old age as he must have been then in his early eighties. Hence his year of birth must have been around 1492.

(c) Raja Mansingh Tomar of Gwalior died in 1516. Tansen had composed many Dhrupad compositions in praise of this illustrious ruler and in one of these, he had called him his benevolent patron.<sup>5</sup> A fine and mature composer of excellent Dhrupad compositions like Tansen must not have been less than twenty-five years of age at that time. This fact also would go to establish the year of his birth around 1492.

Tansen was a Hindu and remained a Hindu all his life. Music accompanied his funeral procession.<sup>6</sup> Demonstration of joy at the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, translator, Blockman

<sup>2</sup> *Raga-mala*, a collection of Kudan Singh gharana, p.18A

<sup>3</sup> *Akbar-nama*, translator, Beveridge, sec2, p.279

<sup>4</sup> *Muntakhabuttawarikh*, Badaun, translator, Author, p.273, sec 2

<sup>5</sup> *Akbari Durbar Ke Hindi Kavi (The Hindi Poets of Akbar's Court)*, p.110

<sup>6</sup> *Akbar-nama*, p.880, sec.2

death of old venerable people through music sung and played along with the funeral procession, is a pure Hindu custom. Moreover, even Hindus who were associated intimately with Sufi saints or poets, were entitled to "Miyan" as a prefix or a suffix.

While other Sufi traditional orders had banned music, the Chisti Sufi Order has admitted it into its fold. It is due to the blessings of Shaikh Saleem Chisti of Sikri that Jahangir was born. Akbar was a true devotee of this well-known Sufi saint and he was chiefly promoted by his own devotion to him to make Sikri his capital from 1571 to 1585. Tansen, at this time, was Akbar's court musician and had the opportunity to visit the saint and sing before him. The saint, it may be recalled, was very fond of his music.

As regards Shaikh Mohd Ghaus, Tansen had probably no direct association or link with him. Historical Sufi writings connected with Mohd Ghaus make no mention of Tansen. According to the author of the work *Masirul-Umara*, Mohd Ghaus had written his distinguished work *Jawahire-Khams* in 929 Hijri (1523) when he was twenty-two years of age. This proves that he was born in 1501 or so. Thus he was eight or nine years junior to Tansen in age and could not have been the latter's preceptor.

In view of these facts, the legends about Tansen's birth as a result of the blessings of Mohd Ghaus and Tansen's tomb in Gwalior, give rise to a historical controversy yet to be resolved. It is, moreover, a fact that Shaikh Mohd Ghaus and his brother Shaikh Gadayee had lost the favour of Akbar's court and were treated as 'persona non grata'.<sup>1</sup>

It is just possible that Tansen became a disciple-devotee of Shaikh Saleem Chishti, for which a change of religion was not necessary. There are many examples of non-Muslim devotees of the Sufi saints and Muslims deeply moved and influenced by the Vaishnava cult.

A man called Makarand of Gwalior is said to have been

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, pp.133-135

Tansen's music teacher.<sup>1</sup> But "Makarand" might have been a pen-name and it might also have been his own father's name as it is popularly believed. It is also maintained that Mohd Adil Shah Adali was also Tansen's teacher.<sup>2</sup> It is also just possible that Bakshu, the court-musician of Raja Mansingh Tomar and a mature, elderly musician of vast experience and versatile genius, might have influenced Tansen, a younger musician.

Works written during Tansen's life-time do not provide any solid evidence that Tansen was a pupil of Swami Haridas of Brindavan. While some works have mentioned Swami Haridas as Tansen's teacher, others have asserted that Shri Govind Swami was Tansen's teacher. All such works, however, were written hundreds of years after Tansen's death and express opposite and antagonistic view-points.

Some music biographers and historians have even asserted that Tansen was a pupil of the famous Haridas "Dagur", who was, in fact, much younger to the former, chronologically speaking.

Faqirullah has called Tansen an "Atayee" (amateur) and according to him, mere practical musicians with no profound knowledge of music as a great art, belonged to this category which represents a pejorative term. He has gone to the extent of calling Tansen even unlettered (nirakshar) and illiterate.<sup>3</sup> Tansen might have been "illiterate" in the usual, current sense of the word, but he was a man of vast knowledge gained through experience. Having lived in intimate contact with poets, pundits, and savants of a high order, his genius as a musician-composer had blossomed forth into full exuberance. Just as Kabir who knew not how to read or write, wrote verses that were collected and preserved by the devotees and his disciples, Tansen's great compositions were preserved and transmitted to the succeeding generations by his disciples and the followers of his tradition.

Tansen composed hundreds of Dhrupad compositions and some of them were associated with the name of Akbar;<sup>4</sup> Some of

<sup>1</sup> *Raga-mala*, 118A

<sup>2</sup> *Muntakhabuttawarikh*, p557

<sup>3</sup> *Raga-darpana*, 9th chapter, hand-written ms, Rampur State Library

<sup>4</sup> *Ain-I-Akbari*, Blockman 1p.445

these Dhrupad compositions even prove that Akbar studied music treatises like *Sangeet-ratnakar* with great attention and deep interest and in his discussions on music, Tansen was an invariable participant.<sup>1</sup> And it is needless to mention that on such occasions Sanskrit scholars and pundits were always present.

Some Dhrupad compositions by Tansen also prove that he was fully conversant with the ancient "Moorcchana" tradition as well as the comparatively new "Muqam" tradition in music<sup>2</sup>. He enriched knowledge of music through his close contacts with foreign Muslim musicians of Akbar's court. New conceptions and interpretations of many Ragas came into vogue due to these historic changes in Akbar's time. Such changes and transformations were inevitable as a product of a historic process.

Raja Mansingh Tomar, ruler of Gwalior (1486—1516), was the first patron of Tansen. His son, Vikramjit, ruled only for two years and in 1518, Ibrahim Lodi had subjugated Gwalior and brought the vanquished ruler with him to Agra. In 1526, Vikramajit was killed while fighting against Babar as an ally of Ibrahim Lodi.

It is just possible that Tansen lived from 1518 to 1526 under the shelter of Vikramajit, his patron, and during this period, came into contact with Swami Haridas of Brindavan. But it cannot be definitely stated where Tansen lived during these unsettled conditions of political change.

In 1549, Mohd Adil Shah Adali occupied the Suryavanshi throne. He was a brother-in-law to Sher Shah's son, Islam Shah and a profound scholar and lover of music. He was a patron to such illustrious men as Ramdas, Bazbahadur and Tansen. The well-known Hemu Adali was his prime minister. Tansen was Adali's pupil as well as his protege. It was perhaps after the downfall of the Suryavanshi reign that Tansen went and sought shelter under Ramchandra Baghela.

In 1562, Tansen left Ramchandra's Court and came to Akbar's

<sup>1</sup> *Raga-mala*, 275A, 281A

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, 186A

court where he lived the last part of his life.<sup>1</sup> It is said that Tansen was forced to leave Ramchandra's patronage and join Akbar's court against his wishes.<sup>2</sup> It is said that the well-known Jainkhan had spoken to Akbar about Tansen's music in extremely eulogistic terms.<sup>3</sup> As a result of this, one Commander Jalal Khan Koorchi was sent with an army to bring Tansen and Raja Ramchandra had to part with him in deep sorrow<sup>4</sup>. It is this very patron Raja Ramchandra who on one occasion being profoundly moved by Tansen's music had given him a reward of one crore of gold coins.<sup>5</sup> He was universally praised for his great generosity.

Tansen was granted the highest rank at Akbar's court.<sup>6</sup> It is said that he used to sing standing during the day time and he sat and sang in the night, especially on certain important occasions.<sup>7</sup> And every day, on one pretext or another, Akbar used to give him some rewards or gifts as money or other valuable articles as a token of appreciation of his music.<sup>8</sup>

Tansen readily adjusted to this new life under Akbar's patronage. In a mood of exaltation in many of his Dhrupad compositions, Tansen called Akbar a world-teacher, an image and incarnation of God, one who liberated him (Tansen) from all the misery and sorrow of life, performing as if an act of deliverance for him. Tansen, in a word, looked upon Akbar as a seer, a savant and a great preceptor.<sup>9</sup>

Here is an example of Tansen's Dhrupad in praise of Akbar:

The learned only sing thy praise

Thy fame embraces the whole world

<sup>1</sup> *Akbar-nama*, p. 279, Sec. 2

<sup>2</sup> *Muntakhabuttawarikh*, p. 345, Sec. 2

<sup>3</sup> *Ajkal (Urdu)*, Music Number, p. 95

<sup>4</sup> *Muntakhabuttawarikh*, p. Sec. 2. 345

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>6</sup> *Akbar-nama*, p. 270, sec. 2

<sup>7</sup> *Kitab-navarasa*, Preface, p. 49

<sup>8</sup> *Iqbal-nama, Jahangir, Rampur Copy*

<sup>9</sup> *Raga-mala*, 124A

The living creatures utter thy name only  
 The whole world is covered by thy glory.  
 Tansen addresses thee O Lord of mercy !  
 It is at thy behest that music reigns in the court  
 It is due to thee that Ragas and Raginis sound so sweet  
 O Lord, Lord of the world, thy name is soothing and  
 comforting.

All this, however, is symbolic of a change in Tansen's mental outlook in this period of transition, though Akbar himself was instrumental in bringing about a close contact between Shaikh Saleem Chishti and Tansen at an earlier stage. Hence Tansen's warm tribute to Akbar in such laudatory terms as "seer and savant". But Tansen's name does not occur in any authentic list of courtiers who became the followers of Akbar's eclectic religion, "Deen-e-Ilahi". It is just possible, he did not accept "Deen-e-Ilahi".

At Tansen's death, Akbar had said that it was the death of the Ragas of our music and that for the past centuries there was none like Tansen in the sweetness and skill of the art of music.<sup>1</sup> The question arises that if Akbar had heard the music of Swami Haridas, alleged to be Tansen's teacher, why was he prompted to praise Tansen's music in such superlative terms? But then, even Abul Fazal wrote and testified that the like of Tansen was not born for several centuries in the past.<sup>2</sup>

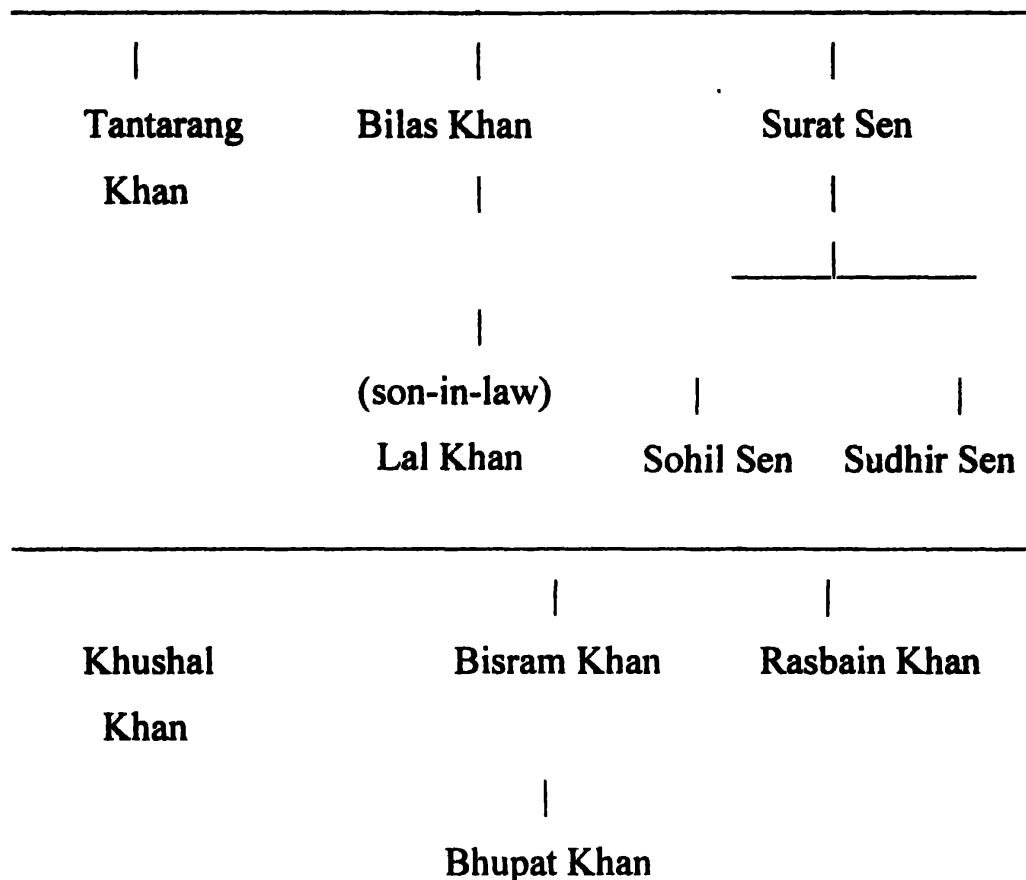
Mughal kings with Hindu wives had become almost a convention, and during Akbar's reign, the custom was followed with greater freedom. The aristocrats, the courtiers and the elite were carried away by this popular convention brought into vogue by their rulers. Tansen, too, followed this convention that aimed at the rejection of the barriers of caste and creed and so had Muslim children from his Muslim wife and Hindu children from his Hindu

<sup>1</sup> *Akbar-nama*, p. 880, sec. 3

<sup>2</sup> *Ain-i-Akbari*, Blockman, p. 445

wife. Based on authentic facts the following description of his descendants is now acceptable to all discerning scholars.

### Tansen



This family tree is supported by historical facts as stated below:

Abul Fazal has mentioned the name of Tansen's son, Tantarang Khan, among the thirty-six distinguished musicians of Akbar's court.<sup>1</sup> There is a reference of Bilas Khan, Tansen's son, both in *Badshah-nama* and *Raga-darpana*.<sup>2</sup> The author of *Raga-darpana*, Faqirullah was the Governor of Kashmir during Jahangir's and Shah Jahan's reigns and he had full knowledge of Tansen's contemporaries and also his descendants. He has also mentioned the names of Tansen's son, Surat Sen and also his grand-sons, Sohil Sen and Sudhir Sen.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ain-l-Akbari*. Blockman, p. 681-682

<sup>2</sup> *Ain-l-Akbari*, Blockman, Commentary, p. 680

<sup>3</sup> *Raga-darpana*, 9th Part and 10<sup>th</sup> part

Bilas Khan's daughter was married to Lal Khan who was known to the family and Tansen himself had put him under Bilas Khan's care and guidance.<sup>1</sup> Again, Tantarang Khan and Bilas Khan were distinguished musicians of Jahangir's court. Shah Jahan had appointed Lal Khan, Bilas Khan's son-in-law as his court musician and had conferred on him the title "Guna-Samundar Khan" in 1630.<sup>2</sup> After Lal Khan's death, his son Khushal Khan was appointed the court musician and was also the recipient of his father's title "Guna-Samundar Khan"<sup>3</sup>. Bisram Khan was also a court musician and used to sing together with Khushal Khan.

It is recorded that Aurangzeb's coronation on July 23, 1658, was celebrated with music.<sup>4</sup> Also, that in 1668, Khushal Khan, Bisram Khan and Rasbain Khan used to visit Aurangzeb's court, and on October 22, 1668, Aurangzeb had given a reward of three thousand rupees to Khushal Khan. It is also recorded that on Bisram Khan's death, his son, Bhupat Khan and his brother, Khushal Khan were granted a royal gift (Khilat) by Aurangzeb.<sup>5</sup>

From Akbar's time to that of Aurangzeb, the above family-tree has an authentic basis. Though the families of other musicians have tried to forge doubtful and fictitious links with Tansen's family and his descendants, the thing does not seem to have any historical authenticity. The following is a fairly authentic list of Tansen's disciples:

1. Tantarang Khan
2. Bilas Khan
3. Miyan Chand—He was fifth in the list of the distinguished musicians of Akbar's court.
4. Surat Sen—According to Faqirullah, he was the son and disciple of Tansen.

<sup>1</sup> *Ajkal (Urdu)*, Music Number, p100

<sup>2</sup> *Raga-darpana*, 10th Chapter

<sup>3</sup> *Aurangzeb-nama*, p. 44, Part 1

<sup>4</sup> " " p. 10, Part 2

<sup>5</sup> " " p. 32, Part 2



5. Bakht Khan Kalawant (Gujarat)—According to Faqirullah, he was also a pupil of Tansen.

The works *Raga-mala*, *Sangeet-sar* and *Ganesh-stotra* have been attributed to Tansen. Excepting the last-mentioned work, the first two are extant, but their authenticity is not free from dispute. In a work like "Raga-Kalpadruma" many Dhrupad compositions of Tansen are available as a literary treasure but their original form, musically speaking, is definitely garbled and unauthentic.

In a rare collection of compositions of the Gwalior tradition, there are many unknown and unpublished Dhrupad compositions by Tansen, and from many points of view, they are very valuable. As regards the purity and authenticity of Ragas, Tansen's Dhrupad compositions are an undisputed authority. But it is difficult to say how far their present version among musicians is a true reproduction of the original. The original compositions, set to certain Ragas, are not often sung in the same Ragas but in other Ragas, sometimes entirely different. Therefore, it is difficult to make a final comment on the present version of these old, time-honoured Dhrupad compositions, as music too, like all art, is subject to the inexorable law of change.

But what must be borne in mind is the fact that from the time of Tansen Dhrupad came to be recognised as the classical mode or style of singing in Hindustani music and it was later divided into the four well-known styles or Banis: Gaurhar, Khandar, Nohar and Dagur, one or two of which still exist.

It may also be pointed out that Tansen's Dhrupad compositions were preserved and sung by generations of musicians after his death and the tradition named after Tansen's name called "Senia" still continues in some recognisable form here and there. His Dhrupads are still sung by trained traditionalists among musicians.

Tansen lived at Akbar's court from 1562 to 1589 until his death. During this time, he came into intimate contact with many notable and distinguished poets known to Akbar, and among these may be mentioned Karnes, Dursaji, Holray Bhatt, Kumbhan Das, Vyas, Chandrabhan, Chaturbhuj Das, Raja Askaran, Kunwar Prithviraj, Surdas, Madanmohan, Manohar, Todarmal, Narhari,





The conception of Moorchhana, that was the basis of our ancient music, has now unfortunately been replaced by the Mela system of Ragas. Sage Bharata had given a clear analysis of this basic principle without examining which, one cannot understand the significance of ancient music. Tansen in the following Dhrupad composition, has made a pointed reference to this fact:

Dhaivat, Pancham. Madhyam, Gandhar  
Rishab, Sharaj Sur and Re—these the learned  
Practise with perseverance.

Also practice and master the thirteen  
Alankars and the twenty-two Srutis  
and also sing musical notes with a correct intonation.  
Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Dha Ni Sa  
Sa Dha Re, Sa Ni Dha Ni Dha Pa  
Ma Ga Re.

The learned describe that there are three notes  
In between notes as finer tones and shades,  
And Tansen describes the seven notes,  
The three Grams, the twenty-one Moorchhanas.  
And the thirty-six finer shades  
of notes, the subtle points of nad.

Here is a lively description of the languorous eyes that have  
not slept in the night:

Your red eyes betray your sweet dalliance  
With your lover in the night  
The eyes like lotus leaves are restless and are  
besides themselves.  
The eyebrows close and open by turns as  
if love's arrows shot.  
The flowers bloom in the lake and it seems  
Everything around is surcharged with the Lord's love.

The following Dhrupads by Tansen are in praise of Daulat Khan's handsome figure, an unusual subject to which full justice has been done:

Oh I cannot describe the light of my beloved brother's face!  
I know it in my heart. And my heart  
Knows what praise I wish to render to him.

I cannot compare him with anything  
 I know it only in my heart.  
 I find the fruit of my desire  
 In the company I keep of beloved Daulat Khan.

There is another composition, with similar unusual theme, Daulat Khan's anger and protest through silence. The situation applies only to the type of women called 'manini in Indian poetry. But Tansen has treated the subject quite convincingly in the present Dhrupad:

Beloved, why do you get angry with me?  
 If I have erred, forgive my mistake  
 Now come and embrace me, I am restless in my anxiety.  
 Do not cease to speak your loving words to me and  
 Become not a stranger to me,  
 Who will lay down his life for you when you are in peril ?  
 I claim to be your true friend.  
 Laughingly I interrogate him, but  
 Why does not the bright beloved Daulat Khan answer?

And the last composition in which Tansen describes the words spoken by the complaining beloved (Khandita Nayika) to her wayward lover, is truly representative of our traditional amorous poetry:

You have come with tired, languorous face I know it all  
 Your staggering feet, your stammering words  
 And your intermittent yawns hide nothing.  
 Though the secrets are revealed, the lover  
 Tells not the tale of his sweet dalliance.  
 Tansen's lord, Krishna, for nothing has  
 Taken all this trouble to visit the love-lorn beloved at dawn.

## **GOPALAKRISHNA BHARATI**

*Mudikondan C. Venkatarama Iyer*

When one just mentions the name of *Nandanar Charitram*. in the Katha Kalakshepam (musical discourse), people flock in hundreds and thousands and listen to this popular story of Nandan the Pariah (Harijan) who found a place in the temples of South India as one of the sixty-three Nayanars— devotees of Siva. The author of this popular musical narrative is Gopalakrishna Bharati.

Gopalakrishna Bharati, one of whose immortal works is this *Nandanar Charitram*, lived in that very age, the first half of the 19th century, when the world of music saw the appearance in the Cauvery Delta of Sri Tyagaraja, Muthuswami Dikshitar and Syama Sastri, the great trinity of Karnataka Music. The benevolent Maratha regime at Tanjore was already on its wane; but the modes of artistic expression in music, dance, drama, painting, sculpture as well literature that had reached the zenith of everlasting beauty during that regime, continued. This period was the culmination of the progressive efforts in these fields of at least three centuries that preceded it.

A few historical facts and a good deal of local oral tradition and information are known from which a life account of Gopalakrishna Bharati is reconstructed here. Some of the evidence is from his own works. The rest is culled from wide and detailed enquiries in and around Mudikondan, Anandatandavapuram, Tiruvidaimarudur, Konerirajapuram, Tiruppangoor, Chidambaram, Mayuram and some other lesser known places in Tanjavur district with all of which the composer was connected. Ramaswami Bharati, his father, was a Brahmin of the Vadama sub-sect of Bharadwaja Gotra. Ramaswami and his father had been Veena

artists who had to give up their practice to turn towards other jobs. Gopalakrishna, the son, was born in Narimanam, a village near Nagapattinam in Tanjavur district in Tamil Nadu in 1810. The aptitude towards music is therefore partly inherited and partly acquired, for his father must have been his first 'Guru'. He had his first education in Sanskrit, Tamil and music at Mudikondan. To this day, the villagers point out the house in which he lived for many years, and also refer to the few compositions of his on the village and its men, of his times.

Gopalakrishna was orphaned early in his life. Anantarama Iyer, a cousin, took the place of the guardian, only to cheat Bharati of the small property that had been bequeathed to him by his father. Having got the property, he drove Bharati away from home. This poverty and its attendant hardships find their echo in the following lines of Nandan:

"Nanmaiyum tunmaiyum illamal pochchu  
Sandikkucchandhi kuttadida lachchu  
Samiyum illamal engeyo pochchu"  
[When neither good nor bad stayed  
The wanderers danced from one lane to another  
Even God did not stay and strayed.]

It was at Mudikondan that this wandering orphan found his first benefactors in Tashil Venkappa Aiyer, Peishkar Muthupaiyar and Mali Tyagaraja Aiyer. Mudikondan gave him his early education. He studied Sanskrit under Diksha Appaiyanathu Aiya, Tamil from Chokka Pillai, the father of Subbaraya Vathiyar. He lived at Mudikondan in the Agraharam East Street in the southern end. This was said to be Bharati's own house. Under their patronage Bharati lived till he was about twenty-five. Later, he moved to other places like Tiruvidaimarudur, Konerirajapuram and Anandatandavapuram and then returned to Mudikondan. That is why he came to be known as Mudikondan Gopalakrishna Bharati. The first available printed edition of his Nandanar Charitram in 1861, by the then French Collector of Karaikkal, bears his name in this manner.

Gopalakrishna Bharati had no special attachment towards worldly life. By nature he was a 'Bhakta' who stood at the feet of

his master. He had his predilection towards Siva. He spent several days of his life visiting Siva kshetras (temples). Stories of Saiva Nayanars in Periya Puranam and Upamanyu's Bhakta Vilasam appealed to him very much.

Bharati met Ramadas, a great master of Hindustani music, at Tiruvidaimarudur. He learnt this style of singing with its modes and characteristics, their fullness and variety. At this time he also met the composers of Tamil songs, Ananta Bharati and Ghanam Krishna Aiyer. Under their encouragement, Bharati's poetic genius and musical talents got nurtured.

On Sri Rama Navami Day in 1835, Bharati came to Anandatandavapuram. Here he was noticed by the rich Mirasdai who gave him a helping hand. Annu Aiyar and Sivaswami Aiyar who were then joined by Rishabhadrhwaja Dikshitar, a Sanskrit Scholar, were his patrons. It was at the suggestion of this latter scholar that Bharati's crystallised 'Nandi-Chindu' song-form was to be the basis for his grand Nandanar Charitram. Even while the suggestion was in the offing, Bharati slipped away unnoticed to the Siva temple at the nearby Tiruppangoor and stood devoutly gazing at the Deity Sivalokanatha, and his obedient Nandi, the Bull. Deeply moved by sudden and spontaneous inspiration, Bharati began to sing in a tense voice the following superb songs. Some of these were later incorporated by him into his *Nandanar Charitram*.

Vazhi maraithirukkude—malai pola  
 madu paduthirukkude.  
 Orunalum varada bhaktan  
 Tirunalaippovarenum chittan  
 Ulahengum prasiddan kandu  
 Odunkamalirundadu kutram.  
 Satre vilahiyirum pillai  
 Sannidanam maraikkudam

\* \* \*

Kudittar, yekkalittar, ullam kalittar.

[The divine bull is lying, obstructing  
 the view, like a hill



The devotee who had not come ever before  
 He is a mystic by name Tirunalaipovar  
 He is of universal fame  
 You have sinned by obstructing his view  
 Please move aside, my son!

\* \* \*

Nandanar jumped in ecstasy with full  
 of joy and to his  
 heart's content.]

Annu Aiyar who came in search of him took him back home. But thenceforth, Bharati lived independently so that he could serve God better. He supported himself by doing unchavritti, eating the food that is given as alms. He also began performing the Katha Kalakshepam. For each of his performances, he was given from ten to fifteen rupees. This money he deposited with Annu Aiyar, the patron. After six months, the story of Nandan, in its present form, was completed. The work immediately gained popularity and fame.

Bharati, while writing the Nandanar Charitram, had deviated from the original story of the Puranas. In order to dramatize it, he had introduced a new but very popular character in the Brahmin, Vedyar, as the landlord. Nandan is the farmer, cultivator, but a Harijan and an outcaste. His anxiety to go to the temple of Siva in the month of Markazhi (December) to see Siva in His sacred Dance, and the Vedyar's anxiety for the caretaking of the lands and his practical interests and their conflict forms the basis of this story. The story has thus a spiritual reformatory purpose.

Gopalakrishna Bharati's greatest service to Tamil literature lies in the simple diction of the spoken language that he uses. The Vedyar's speech is in Sanskritised Tamil, and that of Nandan in the colloquial language of the working class, lending dramatic quality to the composition. As a musician we may say that he raised the status of Katha Kalakshepam and, by imparting music to it, made it worthy of the concert hall. Many of his songs are separately sung at concerts and figure also in dance recitals.

At Anandatandavapuram one lady promised to serve him curd every day. Bharati scolded her saying that she should not get him

accustomed to such luxuries. This promise she kept for almost a year. One day she quietly brought him only churned butter-milk. This annoyed the poet. In that mood, he sang in praise of the buffalo and cursed it.

Kedaragowla Raga—Adi Tala

Madavedu maharajanai pola  
 Vaittu rakshittirukkum  
 Karakkum yerumai  
 Nadu pukazhndidum padi  
 Adi karakkum  
 Nammudai sottai  
 Nayum teenda-dinda (Madavedu)  
 Salem seemaikkup poye  
 Panam Koduttappu pillai  
 Seshan vangi vandadoru madu  
 Palaik karandu panguvangiyum  
 adakukku  
 Pannam kodukkiran yedo  
 Parum gunamudaya (Madavedu)

[The buffalo nursed and nourished like a king  
 That buffalo yields a full measure of milk  
 and is popular in the country  
 It yields enough to feed the owner's family.  
 The buffalo, which was got from a distant  
 place like Salem by our friend Seshan, yields  
 so much milk that he is able to purchase  
 lands and also advance money on mortgage,  
 by the sale of milk.  
 What a nice buffalo !]

Not only is Bharati full of sentiments and love, we find him also very humorous. Near Mudikondan is a village called Tuttukkudi, where he sang the following in the form of Odam, a boat-song; its humor may be noted.

"Tuttukudi tannil vazhum  
 mahajanangal  
 Danantataiya mahajanangal

Urukku Naradar Rayar Pillai Subbu  
Oru panam sochcham poda  
Subbaiyan idukku."

[The great people who live at Tuttukkudi,  
Wonderful people they are;  
With the mischief maker Subbu on the one hand  
and the donor Subbaiyan on the other.

—*The great people.*]

The villagers were often seen humming this while sowing or reaping their fields. Another song at Mudikondan village :—

"Paravaikal parrakkudu paren  
Serukku Mudikondan  
Chirappudane vilangum."

[See the birds fluttering  
In proud Mudikondan  
That shines with fame.]

It shows Bharati's interest in the fields and cultivable lands as well as his appreciation of Nature. Since the poet lived up to his fortieth year in Mudikondan, he composed songs on the agricultural cultivable plots there and a few people in that village still remember snatches of this song.

Bharati studied yoga and spiritual practices under Guru Govinda Sivam who was at Mayuram then. Bharati composed musical narratives on the lives of Saivite saints, *Iyarpakai Nayanar Charitram*, *Tiruneelakantha Nayanar Charitram*, *Karaikkal Ammaiyar Charitram*, as also other philosophical songs—Jnanacchindu, Jnankummi, Chidambarakkummi and several stray folk songs, classical music compositions, and occasional songs. He composed also a funny drama called Mami Natakam. He also enriched his narrative compositions by including in them Ragamalikas, Viruttam (verses), Dandakam, Chindu, Dwipadi, Tripadi, Lavani (based on Maharashtra style), Todayam, Savayi, Dialogues, and humorous songs.

In these pieces, he has on the whole made use of no less than

70 Ragas. Besides the basic or Kartha Ragas, he has used rare Ragas like Gowri Manohari, Chakravakam, Sarasangi; and the still rarer Ragas (apurva) like Manji, Nowroj, Saraswati Manohari, Desiya Todi, Jingla, Kuranji, Karnataka Behag, Isamanohari, Kanada, Saranga, Hamir Kalyani, Balahamsa, Sama and so on.

In order to show the quality of his diction, the following song may be cited :

## Natanamakriya Raga

## Rupaka Tala

Natanamadinar (Aiyan) Tillai  
Nayakan Ponnambalam tannil  
Tarikita—Takajam tari—Tadinu Dhinuta,  
Tadhina dinata—Kitatakudiki  
Tattaneku Taka tallangu Taka tallangu  
takatadinginnatom

**[The Lord of Tillai  
Danced on the Golden Stage  
With rhythmic cadences of  
Taritakita Takajam Tari-Tadinu  
Dhinuta—Kitatakudiki  
Tattaneku Taka Tallangu  
Takatadinginnatom**

*(Of the drum)]*

In this song which includes the rhythmic syllables (jatis), the dancing feet of Siva can easily be visualized. In order to show the rare Ragas which he chose, the following may be quoted :

## Hamir Kalyani Raga

## Rupaka Tala

**Yedo Teriyamal pochchude—ini  
Yenna seyven ?  
Adi Paraparamakiya Tillai  
Ponnambalayan.**

**[What shall I do?  
I had not known**

Somehow Oh! Eternal Lord!  
 Siva of the Golden Stage!  
 The bliss of your praise and  
 the happiness in your service!]

He was an expert in the rhythms. Bharati has made extensive use of the Talas Adi, Misra, Eka, Chapu, Tripura, Rupaka, Arijampa, Tisra Eka, Ada, Jampa, Misra Jampa, Desadi and so on. Many of his songs contain the intricacies of rhythms, interwoven and incorporated in the 'So'lukattus' (Sabda) of the song. For an illustration the following may be quoted:

Riti Gowla Raga	Misra Jampa Tala
Tandava darisanam tarum—tamadam	
Pannavendam—idu Samayam	
Andavanc un mahimaiye	
Aravindurai seyvar	
Nanareyen pedai	
Yendanukkorutaram	

[Bless me with thy divine Tandava dance,  
 Oh Lord ! delay not, this is the right moment  
 Who knows your fame  
 I know not. Show me once.]

Another song that may be quoted is :

Gowri Manohari Raga	Misra Chapu Tala
Yeppo tolaium inda tunbam—	
Jagadeesan karunai irundalallo inbam!	
Garbhavasa dukkam	Analum kedu !
Gowrimanoharanai dinam nadu.	

[When will my suffering end  
 Oh Lord of the Universe,  
 There will be bliss  
 Only if there is your grace.  
 Birth in its embryo sinful,  
 So daily seek Gowri Manohara (Siva).]

Another very popular song on the dance of Nataraja runs thus:—

Vasanta Raga

Ata Tala

Ashta disaiyum gidu gidunga,

Seshan talai nadunga, andam

adita, Gangai tulisidara,

Ponnadarum kondada—

ishtamudane Gopala Krishnan

pada sadai ada, aravum

Vadamada adin padamada

Tom tomendru padavi tandomendru

(Natanam adinar)]

[All the eight corners (Diks) of the earth shook,

Adishesha's head shook,

The universe shook,

The Ganges sprayed,

The Devas praised,

Gopalakrishnan sang with love,

The Lord's matted locks swayed

The ornamental serpents and their hoods swayed

The Lord danced rhythmically

bestowing salvation on his devotees.]

Bharati popularised his songs by passing them on to his students. The famous poet-musician Sri Vedanayakam Pillai who was the District Munsif at Mayuram, at that time took his training under Bharati and learnt the *Nandanar Charitram*, and taught it to Krishna Bhagavatar. At the request of Kandappa Chetty, Bharati went to Nagapattinam and gave a performance there. The Nandi—Chindu in *Nandanar Charitram* became so popular that it had to be repeated for five successive nights. Monsieur Susain from Karaikkal got it printed at his own cost, after taking due permission. Tyagaraja, the great classical composer, was said to have been moved by the song in Raga Manji—'Varukalamo aiya', "May I come near you. Oh Lord!" in which the humble Pariah-devotee appeals to the Lord plaintively to approach Him! A Tamil scholar Meenakshisundaram Pillai was thrilled by the song in Raga Dhanyasi—opening with the word 'Kanakasabhapati.'

In 1859, when Bharati was barely 49 years old, and was planning a second trip to popularise his other compositions, his friendly patron Annu Aiyar suddenly died. His adopted son Vengu Aiyar tried to take away all the money of Bharati. But friends intervened -and persuaded that the money be returned. A pupil, Ramaswami Aiyar of Mayuram, requested Bharati to reinvest the same at a reliable Bank.

This event, however, turned him away from the hectic singing mood. He yearned for a solitary state. He lived for some time incognito, perhaps in the Ramalinga Swamigal's movement. This state continued for over sixteen years. After Swamigal shook off his mortal coils, Bharati resumed Kalakshepam in October 1876 at his pupil's residence with his Iyarpakai Nayanar Charitram. Mahavaidyanatha Aiyar, Ramaswami Sivan and Veena Vaidyanatha Aiyar of Mayuram are said to have attended this great performance.

The song 'Yezhai-p-parpanadi' on the 'poor' penitent Brahmin Landlord moved Ramaswami Sivan so much that he set a song of his 'Muttukumararaiyane' in the same tune. At the instance of Vedanayakam Pillai, his talented student's performance of the Nandanar Charitram, was arranged at Mayuram and was attended by Bharati and others. Sri Krishna Bhagavata's rendering enchanted Bharati who went up and blessed the musician.

In the next five years Bharati stayed at Mayuram with his disciple Ramaswami Aiyar. He gave away his savings to the temples of Mayuram and Chidambaram. On the Mahasivaratri day of 1881, after the first evening puja at the temple, Bharati came home to rest and closed for ever his eyes.

Of Bharati's personal appearance we have heard that he was of medium stature and build, medium in complexion and unimpressive in appearance. He had a bulging forehead, stooping shoulders, somewhat bald and with somewhat bent legs. He wore his dhoti only up to the knee, and had an upper cloth. But his dress was always spotlessly white. Around his neck Bharati wore a red thread with a single 'Rudraksha' bead which was quite conspicuous by being close to his protruding Adam's Apple. He was quite humble, sensitive and inclined to show an inferiority

complex. But the kindness and cordiality of his friends like Annu Aiyar and students like Ramaswami Iyer made him free from all malice.

At one time, after inviting him, one Aghora Sastri of Mayuram, agreed to Gottuvadyam Krishnan's arrangement of Selva Ganapati Bhagavatar to sing at the discourse. Bharati asked them to give him the chance to perform at least the next day but it was denied. Then came a new song, one in the Maharashtrian Lavani style, castigating Aghora Sastri.

Jagam pugazh Nandan Charittiram Ketka  
Janangal Asai Kondar  
Aghora Sastri pillai Marumahan  
Azhaithidum sedi sonnen.

[The people (of Mayuram) expressed a desire to hear my musical discourse of the story of the famous Bhakta Nandanar and the nephew of Aghora Sastri (of Mayuram) conveyed this news to me.]

Ghoshtigaludane tamburu talam  
Kondanke sendren;  
Gottuvadya Krishnaiyan—  
eni Kudathenac-chonnan.

[I went there with my party and accompaniments to perform— only to be informed by Gottuvadyam Krishna Iyer to my disappointment—that the programme was scrapped.]

Pattu patinaintu ketparam; anta  
Bharati Kathai vendam;  
Sittamudane Selva Ganapati vanthal  
Selavo illai enrar.

[He had so advised, presuming that I may demand some ten or fifteen rupees; on the other hand, a performance by Selvaganapathi may cost very little, as he will be satisfied with whatever pittance he is paid.]



Kalarai Veesam koduttalum athaik  
 Kandiththu kelanam (Ganapati)  
 Valum, tholuma pinainthoru kathai pola  
 Vantha mattum sonnan.

[Accordingly Selvaganapathi gave a haphazard performance within his capacity.]

Eppadiye Irendu thadavai achuthendren  
 Enna sethi entren.  
 Appa namenna seyvom ? Athu kathai  
 Achuthendru sonnan.

[I was thus disappointed twice; but I contacted them a third time only to hear them plead their inability to engage me.]

Vilakku vaiththalam pothumentren  
 Verondrum Vendilane!  
 Uzhakile kizhakku Merckku parpathu Ulaganthanilundo ?

[I even offered to render the performance if only the lights and nothing else were provided at the dais but they were very panicky with this affair.]

Marattiya pennai padach cholli vegu  
 mariyathaikal seythar  
 Vetilazhithu thanjavur (thyyalai) paiyanai  
 vedikai parthu vittar.

[But they had rewarded liberally a Mahratta woman who gave a vocal recital. He (the nephew of Aghora Sastri) had fun with her in his house.]

Pasiththu vandan, Oru kani kandan, athai  
 Parthan; Mavelai!  
 Esainthathuthan upamanamendru  
 Enke erunthathy.

[A hungry man saw a fruit-only to find that it was plaster work. That example can be cited in this instance.]

(Harahara) Nandan Charitram Natesar Mahimai  
Nachai Mudinthathu Par!  
Engilum kanen entha adhisayam  
Enke erunthathy Par!

[The opportunity to deliver a musical discourse of the Nandanar Charitram—the glory of our Lord Nataraja—thus had a bitter episode. So much disappointment I had nowhere else!]

Some wag had his fling at Bharati once:  
Koonakurugal nirguna  
Durguna asuya ahankara Gopalakrishna Bharati

[Stunted, worthless, vicious, malicious, proud Gopala Krishna Bharati.]

After all that is said, we remember Gopala Krishna Bharati of Mudikondan as a godly composer, capable of mellifluous songs with striking rhythms, gifted singer, and author of a masterpiece in Tamil whose popularity has been growing in concert, dance, stage and screen.

## SWAMI HARIDAS

*B. C. Deva*

Swami Haridas has a particularly significant place in the music of North India, for the age in which he lived was an extremely active and productive one. The Moghul Empire was at its acme, with Emperor Akbar on the throne. All walks of life—social, economic, religious and artistic—were throwing up brilliant men. It is, therefore, not very surprising that Haridas found a favourable environment to give his best to society. While one cannot say that he was a pioneer in creating new forms of music, he was certainly a strong driving force in the spread of music, particularly devotional music and the type called dhrupad.

The details of his biography are not well known and what little is known is a subject of controversy. There are different schools holding different views. In the opinion of some, Swami Haridas was born in Multan or Hoshiarpur of Punjab. It is also said that the place of his birth was some village in Haryana in North India.

There are two better known traditions. According to one of them, Swami Haridas was born in 1480 AD. (Samvat 1537, Bhadrapad, Sukla Astami, Budh) in a village called Rajpur, near Brindavan. His father was Gangadhar and his mother's name was Chitra Devi. They were Sanadhya Brahmins. At the age of twenty-five Haridas was initiated into sannyasa by Asudhir, a Saraswat Brahmin. The yogic lineage to which this group belonged was the Nimbarka sampradaya or the virakta parampara. This seems to have taken on the appellation *Tatti sampradaya* in later times. He is said to have died in 1575 A.D

Some scholars; however, are of the opinion that Haridas's father was one Asudhir, a Saraswat Brahmin from Multan.

Asudhir's wife was Ganga Devi. They migrated to the village Khairwali Sadak, near Aligarh in Uttar Pradesh. It was here that Haridas was born in 1512 AD. (Samvat 1569, Paush, Sukla Trayo-dasi, Sukra). It is in memory of Swami Haridas that the village of his birth is now called Haridaspur. At the age of twenty-five Haridas was given initiation into sannyasa by his father. He left his mortal coils in 1607 AD.

In any case, the significant fact was that from childhood he was drawn to a recluse's life. He became a sannyasi even as a youth and shifted his residence to Brindavan, the play-ground of the Immortal Cowherd and his love, Radha. There he made his asram in Nidhuvan and poured out in the seclusion of his hermitage his songs of the love of Radha-Krishna.

Swami Haridas was a musician, poet and mystic, all in one. As a musician he was a great singer of dhrupads and taught musicians like Tansen. As a poet he composed verses in Braj Bhasha (the dialect spoken around Mathura and Brindavan). As a mystic he belonged to the tradition of Vaishnava devotion of Radha-Krishna.

The compositional type called dhrupad in North India seems to have had its origin in very ancient times. Even Bharata in his *Natya Sastra* (2nd AD) uses the word dhruva-giti. Dhruva perhaps meant "the basis of song in which words are set to a definite pattern". The words used in such compositions were called dhruvapad (pada meaning 'word'). In later periods the classical music of North India saw the growth of prabandha, a kind of composition with various sections, generally four in number. Of these, there was one section called the dhruva. Now this dhruva was the 'burden' of the composition and was never omitted. The words (pada) used in the dhruva were the dhruva-pada. The prabandha style of composing and singing were popular till about the 14th century. From then on dhruvapad comes into vogue in North India; prabandha recedes to the background but, perhaps, its remnants could be found in the songs of some Vaishnava temples. The dhrupad, as in some earlier prabandhas, had four sections—the sthayi (burden), the antara, which moves in higher pitches, the sanchari and abhoga. It was in this kind of dhrupad that Swami Haridas sang his songs of divine love.

The period in which the Swami lived saw the highest stage of dhrupad. The area in which he lived also was a fertile region of musical creation. For Raja Man Singh Tomar, one of the greatest patrons of dhrupad, reigned at Gwalior near the Braja land of Mathura and Brindavan. The period just prior to the 15<sup>th</sup> century saw the invasion and spread of Central Asian culture in India. Enormous cultural movements took place during this time and a kind of stability seems to have prevailed during the kingship of Allauddin Khilji (1296-1316 AD). It is during this time that the renowned singer, Gopal Nayak, lived and sang dhruvapads. But the succeeding century is dark and we do not hear much of any great musical life in the North. There seems to have been a general lack of royal patronage of indigenous music.

Man Singh Tomar's rule lasted for nearly thirty years (1486-1516 AD). He was a connoisseur and patron of music. Under his enlightened support dhrupad found a creative environment for growth. His efforts were the cause of the production of Krishna-lila padas in Braj dialect, modelled on the songs of Vidyapati. In his court were a galaxy of musicians like Bakshu, Bhannu and Baiju (?). Tansen sang of his glory and mentioned him as his patron. It was in this atmosphere of a benign and cultured ruler that the dhruvapad blossomed.

Depending on the text, dhrupads were of two kinds: Vishnupad and Dhruvapad. Their musical structures were similar but in content they were different. Vishnupads, as the name shows, sang of the life and deeds of Lord Krishna and were in praise of him. The other variety had as its text subjects like description of seasons, eulogies of kings and so on. Eventually the Vishnu-pads became an important part of the repertoire of devotional songs of Vaishnavaites. But, the style of singing of these dhrupads seems to have been considerably different from those sung in the Royal Muslim courts of the day.

Swami Haridas's compositions were, then, strictly Vishnupads. But even his songs which do not strictly refer to Lord Krishna, have been called Vishnupads, perhaps because of the general tone and the mystic source of his music. There is not much doubt, however, that his compositions were musically of the dhrupad type. He is also said to have composed tirwats, ragamalas and so

on. There are about 128 compositions extant in this tradition, of which about 18 are philosophical and 110 devotional. The former are known as Siddhanta pada, and the latter as the Keli mala.

That he was deeply learned and widely acquainted with the music of his days is evident. He describes how Radha and Krishna are sporting and says, "Two beams of light are playing. Unique are their dance and music. Ragas and Raginis of heavenly beauty are born. The two have sunk themselves in the ocean of raga." Besides such description of ragas, mention is found in his works of stringed instruments like kinnari and aghouti. His compositions also contain references to mridanga, duff, alapana and ragas like-kedara, gouri, malhar, vasant.

The saint-singer was not only a great musician himself but also a great teacher and inspiration to many a musician. The greatest of his pupils was Tansen, one of the "nine gems" of Akbar's court. Tansen's discipleship with Swami Haridas is still a matter of tradition and popular belief. There is no incontrovertible evidence that this Tansen was a student of the Saint. Further, neither the life of Tansen, nor his style shows an imprint of the religious fervour of Haridas. He was a courtier, having all the ambitions and attitudes of his class and there is no tradition of his having lived in Brindavan. There seems to have been another Tansen who was disciple of Govinda Swami. This second Tansen who composed many Vishnupads lived about three decades later and spent his last days in Brindavan.

A popular account has it that the great dhrupad singer and composer, Baiju, was a contemporary of Tansen and a disciple of the Swami. The *Raga Darpana*, which is a translation of Mi Kutuhel compiled at the instance of Raja Man Singh, does not mention Baiju's name. However, Jagannatha of Shahajahan's court talks of Nayak Baiju and Nayak Gopal as being prior even to Bakshu of Man Singh's court. As Swami Haridas was a child when this king ascended the throne of Gwalior, Baiju could not have been a pupil of Haridas.

Incidentally it may be mentioned that there was another Haridas, a dhrupad singer of eminence. This musician was called Haridas Dagur and it is probable that he lived much later than

Swami Haridas. The greatness of the Swami was not of his having been only musician. As was already mentioned, his songs have a literary beauty and fine simplicity. But, above all he was a great mystic and devotee, belonging to the lineage of the saint-singers of the "Bhakti movement"—a socio-religious surge which engulfed the whole of India, influencing its music extensively, deeply.

*Bhakti* (adoration) is an intensely personal devotion to the Godhead. Such personal and emotional attachment finds its outlet in various modes of human expression and a state of ecstatic relation of the bhakta (devotee) to the Adored is voiced forth in poems, hymns and songs. The Vedic hymns to Ushas and Varun are some of our earliest devotional songs. But a very powerful and overwhelming social wave swept over this country, particularly after the *Bhagavata purana*, Ramanuja and Madhva, say roughly after the 10th century AD. This force was something new and a sustained effort was made to give this divine emotion and vision a theological orientation. The popular Krishna legend was converted into mystic symbolism. The attachment of the individual to the Adored might take on the colour of awe, humility (*santabhava*), respect, subservience (*dasya bhava*), friendship (*sakhya bhava*) and love of the lover to the beloved (*madhurya bhava*). With the almost complete identification of Krishna with the Adored, there was a large-scale exodus and pilgrimage of bhaktas to Brindavan, the pasture land where Krishna dallied with gopis (milkmaids). This naturally made the *madhurya bhava* the finest form of adoration, raising the physical love of man and woman to the mystical love of man to the Lord.

Swami Haridas belonged to this tradition of *madhurya bhakti*. It is said that he was deeply affected by the southern philosopher and bhakta, Nimbarka. Nimbarka, a Telugu philosopher of the 13th century, sojourned to the North spreading the gospel of Radha-Krishna love. This missionary expounded the philosophy of *bhedabheda*: the doctrine of difference-cum-identity as between the Supreme soul and the individual soul. Swami Haridas's religious philosophy embraces not only the Radha-Krishna love and adoration, but the witnessing of the love by the human mind—a state of mind called the *rasa*. This aspect of *rasa*, the

witnessing of differentiated-non-differentiated plays of Radha-Krishna, is the central theme of all his songs and teachings. In this ecstatic trance he sings the play of Krishna among the bowers of Brindavan; that is why his Lord of adoration is called Kunj bihari (Kunj ==lover, bihari = one who plays). Even more than the Lord, Radha becomes the central figure of all his songs. He sings, "who knows of the quality of things more than Radha ? If anyone has any knowledge at all, it is by her grace. None knows the beauty of raga, tala and dance, as Radha does. Many are the savants who have acquired mastery over the principles of music, the purity and form of it; but they are as if defeated in the presence of Radha's knowledge of beauties of the art."

Swami Haridas began the Haridasi sampradaya and he had many a spiritual disciple. Some of the more important of this lineage were Vitthal, Vipul, Viharin Dev, Krishna Das. They fostered his tradition of devotional music. The main feature of this was congregational singing. In the Braja country this congregation is called the samaj and is akin to the sankirtan of Bengal and the bhajana goshti of South India. Even to this day devotees gather for the samaj on special occasions and sing of the holy love of Radha and Krishna.

Swami Haridas was a recluse and a hermit. From the age of twenty-five when he became a sannyasi he kept away from earthly wealth and power. It is said that once a rich merchant devotee of the Swami gave him a vial of exquisite scent. The saint buried it then and there in the earth. The devotee was indeed sore that so costly a gift was treated as of so little a value. However, when he visited the temple the next day, he not only found the sanctum filled with the pleasant smell of the unguent, but the very idol of the Lord appeared bathed in it.

Though one of the greatest singers of his time, Haridas was completely indifferent to any laurels. He shunned all publicity. A story goes that the Emperor Akbar wanted to hear him. It was, of course, impossible to fetch the Swami to the Royal court; and the hermitage was out of bounds to kings and such like. Finally Tansen suggested a ruse. Akbar would go in rags as a tambura bearer with Tansen to Haridas. So the two went and the Emperor listened with rapt wonder to the heavenly music. When they came



back to the court, Akbar remarked to Tansen, "How is it that with all your greatness your music is so poor compared to the Swami's?" Tansen replied, "What else can it be? For I sing to the Emperor of this land, but he sings to the Emperor of the Creation." For Haridas was a saint, a mystic and a singer completely dedicated to the adoration of Kunj bihari and immersed in the rasa of this ecstasy. Hence it is said that "a rasika like him has not been on this earth or the sky; neither will there be one like him."





